

miniMAG

issue145

samael





Fealty and Destruction

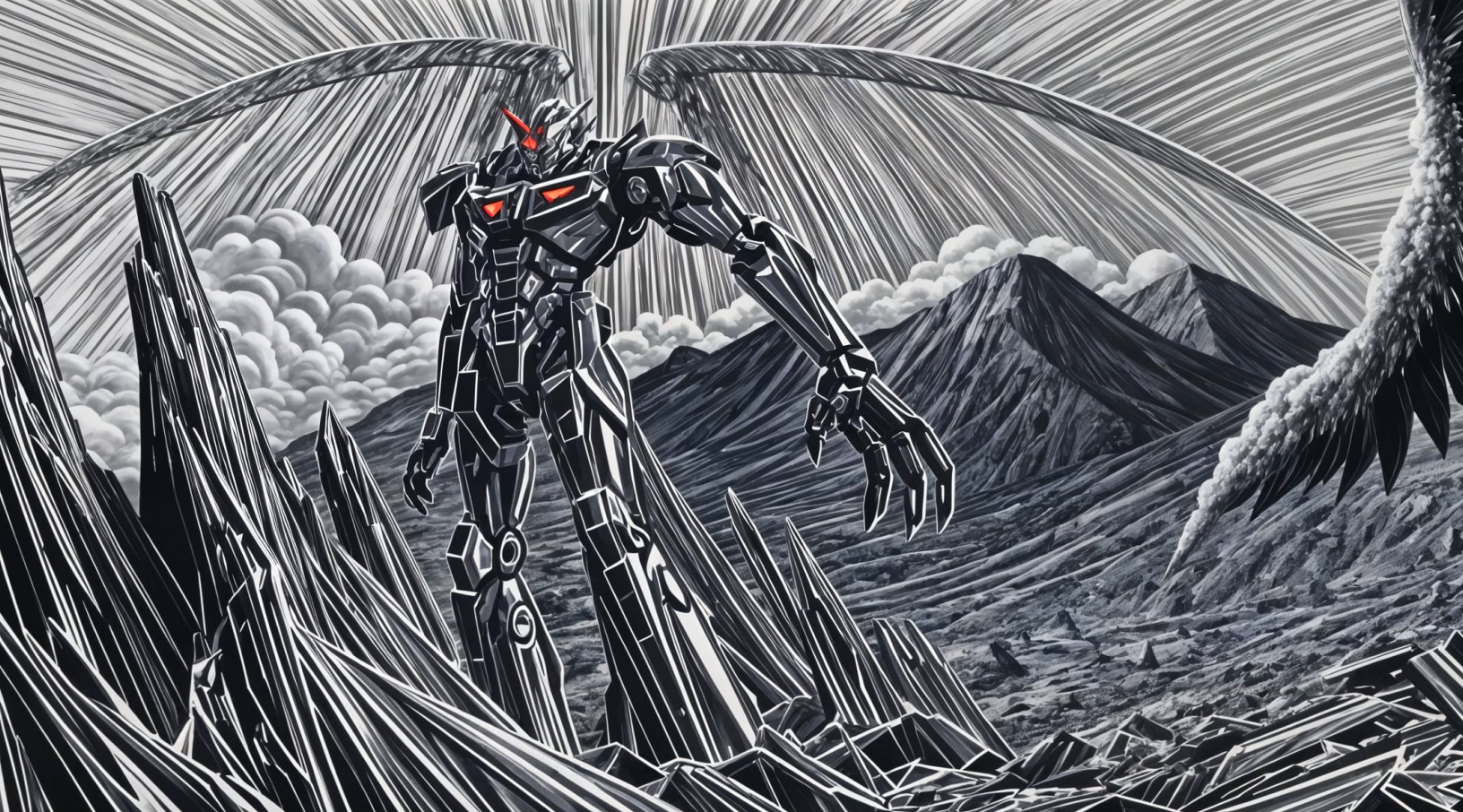
Nik Hoffman

Lustful eyes and lustful flesh
Caress the ways of sinful nights
To induce a soul to brake upon
The stony crags of death.

Smoky midnight skies unfurl,
And all that is, is now forgot;
Empty endless bitter void,
Bloodless tongues all scream for naught.

The moon drooping, and crashing down,
Its conflagration raging on,
My beloved's bones now charred to black,
Taken by flames of sinner's reign.

I am the dread king of this realm,
The false monarch of desires betrayed,
A ruler disordered by shameful want,
A grave that lives and fears his fate.



A Hero Emerges

Andrew Nickerson

The shot opens with a pair of eyes closed, trembling with emotion as the song “Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again” from The Phantom of the Opera starts in the background.

Little Lotte thought of everything and nothing...

Her father promised her that he would send her the Angel of Music...

The eyes squeeze as tears begin forming in them.

Her father promised her...

Her father promised her...

The eyes disappear behind the visor of an elaborate helmet, one that leaves only a woman’s mouth exposed, her lips trembling as the shot pulls back to reveal she’s in full plate armor from head to toe, a Target-style shield bearing an All-Seeing Eye with a mobius in its center on her left arm, a broadsword sheathed on her hip, and a long flowing cape blowing in the breeze behind her, then pulls further back to reveal she’s standing before a lone grave in the snow. The view now moves to her left-hand side, showing she’s carrying a lone white rose in her hands as the lyrics continue.

You were once my one companion...

You were all that mattered...

An image of a framed photo bearing a blurred man's face appears in the background.

You were once a friend and father

Then my world was shattered...

The picture shatters and then disintegrates, causing the woman to flinch and look away. As the song lyrics restart, she bends over and places the rose on top of the grave.

Wishing you were somehow here again...

Wishing you were somehow near...

The woman turns and moves away, the wind fluttering her cape as it blows snowflakes past her.

Wishing I could hear your voice again...

The shot shifts to her front as the picture appears whole behind her, causing her to briefly glance over her shoulder.

Knowing that I never would...

She stops short as the picture vanishes, causing her to harshly turn back, tears visibly running past her cheeks as the shot fades back to her rear as she continues moving away.

Dreaming of you won't help me to do

All that you dreamed I could...

The shot cuts to a scene from the past, where we see she's only a teenager, beautiful, wearing a black dress as she heads into a church around dusk by her mother's side as she begins crying.

Passing bells and sculpted angels,

Cold and monumental

She passes by other people offering sympathies until seeing a coffin, half-open, the lower half of the face of the man from the photo visible as the body lies in state.

Seem, for you, the wrong companions

You were warm and gentle

She stops at the coffin and, as the song transitions to its instrumental, falls on her knees at its edge and begins weeping. Her mother places her hand on the teen's shoulder as news headlines flash on the screen, reading "Tragic Death" and "Senseless Gangland Killing". At the end of the instrumental, she looks up, her eyes filled with a mix of lonely pain and sadness.

Too many years fighting back tears

She breaks from her mother's grip and bolts toward the church door, all around her blurring.

Why can't the past just die?

She clears the parking lot and runs into the woods. As the tempo increases, she's seen racing down a path, mutely shrieking as darkness falls all around her.

Wishing you were somehow here again...



She trips and falls, only to have a massive light fall over her. Looking up, she gasps when she sees the Archangel Michael standing over her in full battle regalia, his own eyes tearing in sympathy.

Knowing we must say goodbye...

She leaps up and into his arms, his embrace enfolding her as light pours over her from above, causing her to straighten up as he places his hand on top of her head.

Try to forgive...

New light emits from Michael's palm, covering her from the legs up, encasing her in the armor seen earlier all the way.

Teach me to live...

The cape emerges from her back, the shield forms on her arm, and the sword appears in her hand as the shot transitions back to her torso as the All-Seeing Eye from her shield appears across her face.

Give me the strength to try...

The helmet finishes forming on her face, and she raises the sword into the air as a war cry emits from her. Fire blasts from the blade as the shot now cuts to a gang hideout, where she's seen cutting down the various occupants with her new weapon.

No more memories, no more silent tears...

The last foes try to flee, but a quick swipe of the blade unleashes a fiery burst that incinerates them. That same fire also sets the building ablaze, and now the shot cuts to her leaving the building as it burns to the ground.

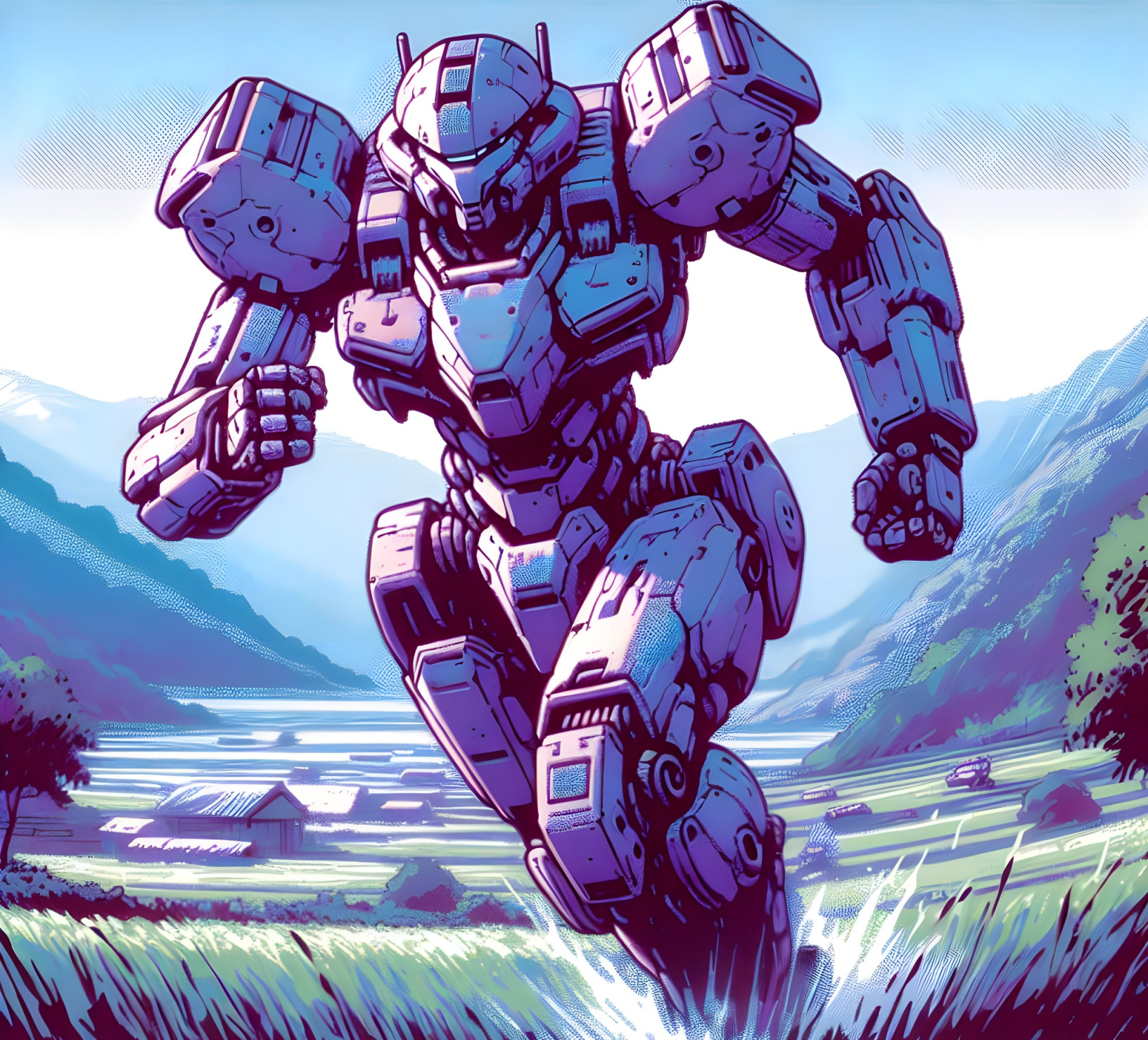
No more gazing across the wasted years...

The shot cuts back to the graveyard, where the woman looks back toward the grave, mouths "Adieu", and then turns away for the last time, the shot transitioning to behind her once more.

Help me say goodbye.

The shot slowly fades away as the wind flutters her cape once more.





Sky Violets

John Swain

Sky violets the evening gate to open at the pointed arch,
a lavender river lifts the mounted stone village.

We labyrinth the branching passages onto the ramparts,
roses coronet the heraldic shield, blue lions pennon
the sunlight threaded through your transparent canopies.

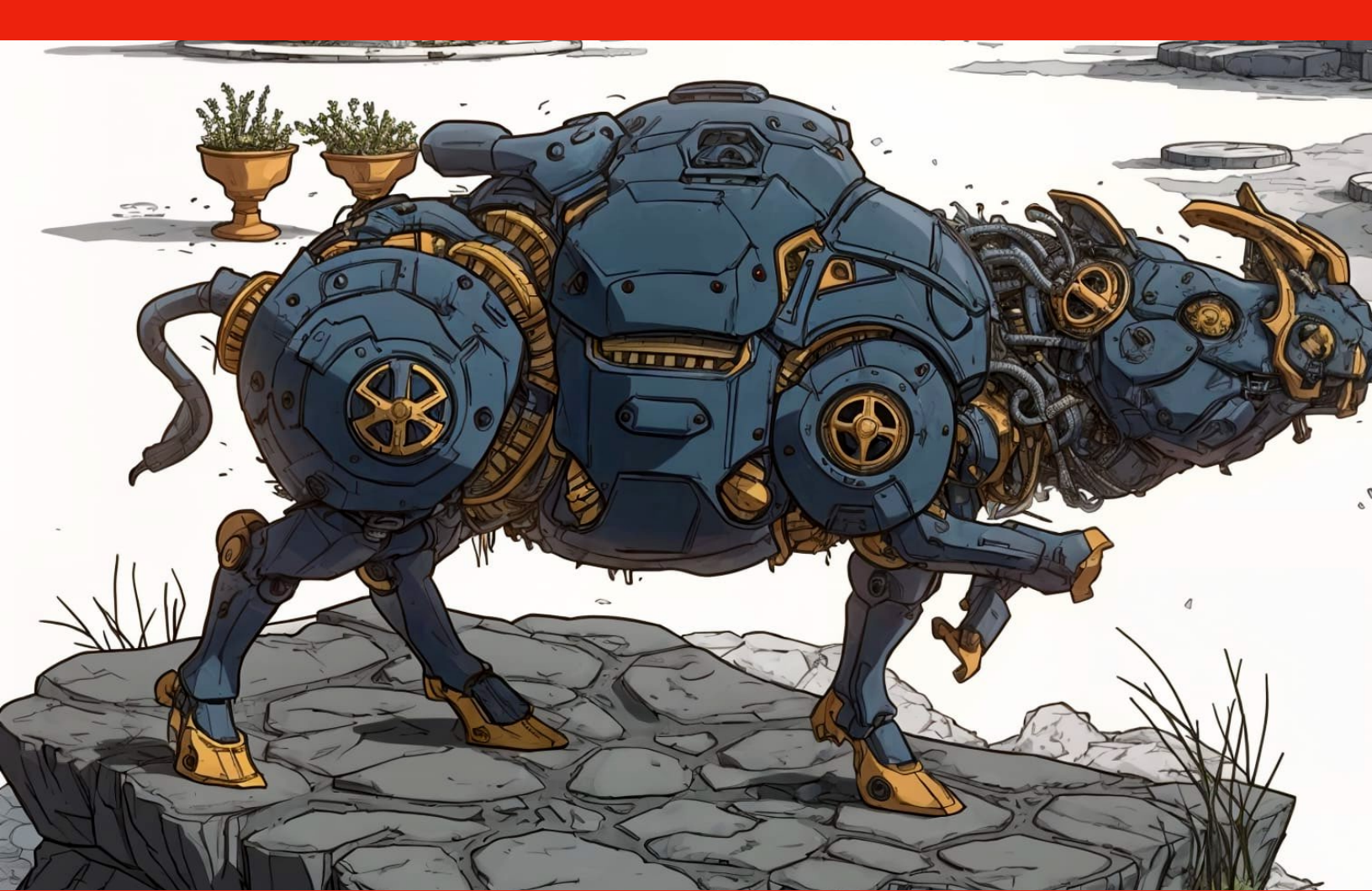
Sun fills our empty dishes with burnt silk,
twilight swims the silver river beneath the waking lamps
as we watch a conjured falcon filament the aerial vault.



Rot

Juliette D'Angelo

He pulls away. So you scrub
And spit
And pick at the hard white lines
between the gaps
Until the blood begins to show
Until the tips of your fingers blue
Strangled
By thin white string
That saws at tender flesh
But the putridity lives
Deeper
Born from
Words unsaid.



Celebrating the 2014 return of a Pig in Shit to Newport, South Wales

Michael Pollentine

there's a statue
covered in shit;
a pig!
Sebastien Boyesen's
handiwork
taken by the authorities
bronzed
carrying baskets
packed with fruit & veg.
traders cried for his return
he commemorates 700
years of markets
in this dying market
town.
(sorry, I meant city.)
his head tilts upwards.



Catharsis

Jack Sullivan

In the end, Abby was the one to kill Franklin. She brought the hammer down on his head. When Franklin tried to crawl away, bits of skull and brain matter trailing behind him, she got on top of him and did it again.

Four blows: one, two, threefour.

We sat around afterwards until we were sure he was dead. Sammy was fascinated by the body. “Can I touch it?” he kept saying. Finally, we said yes. It was early afternoon; Abby and I still didn’t know where we would dispose of the body.

With a grin, Sammy pulled off Franklin’s pants. Abby asked what he was doing. Sammy said he wanted to see the size of Franklin’s cock. I suppose it was because Franklin spent so much time making fun of Sammy’s in the locker room.

“See?” said Sammy, after he removed them. “Not so big!”

And it wasn’t. It hung off Franklin like a wilted sausage. His body smelt sour. When we checked we saw he had pissed his pants.

“Well... that was disappointing,” said Abby, digging her shoe into the dirt. “I thought I would feel something.”

“Like what?”

“Like the word Mr. Sullivan taught us in English. The one that had to do with Greek tragedy.”

“Catharsis?”

“Yeah, that’s it,” said Abby. “I thought I would feel that.”

I wasn’t so sure we’d feel anything. I simply wanted him dead. Having dreamt of this moment for a while, I was disappointed I only felt tired.

Suddenly Sammy began to cry.

“What?” For a moment I got excited something had happened. But there was nothing to get excited about.

“I got dirt all over my clothes!” Sammy yelled. “My mom’s gonna kill me!”

After we had dumped the body in the river, and burnt our bloody clothes, we rode our bikes to McDonalds. Storm clouds cleared and the sun came out. Gliding down the street, I wondered what people thought when they saw us.

Did they have any idea what we had done?

I posed that question to the other two over hamburgers.

“I don’t think anyone liked him,” Abby said, chewing thoughtfully.

“Even if anyone thought we were being suspicious,” said Sammy, “I don’t think they’d guess what it was about.”

I figured they were right. Franklin had a lot of enemies. There was even a rumor his parents didn’t want him.

“A few years after he was adopted,” Abby explained, “they tried to give him back. They told the social worker he had psychological problems. The social worker thought his parents were just having buyers’ remorse.”

Through the window next to us, I watched two children in the ball pit start to fight.

Sammy dropped his voice to a whisper. “Are you having second thoughts?”

I didn’t have second thoughts, if you could call them that. I was the one who decided we should do it. Franklin had tortured Sammy for years: setting his pants on fire, driving nails into his legs. Feeling up Abby while we drank beers in the back of Lisa Keegan’s car. Though he hadn’t done anything to me, specifically, I felt as though he was my responsibility.

Yet Abby had been the one to kill him. I had taken the first swing at Franklin but missed. My shoes slipped on some wet leaves as we chased him down into the ravine. Sammy picked up the hammer to try again, though Franklin easily disarmed him. He stretched Sammy’s arms so far behind his back I thought he was going to tear them off.

Then Abby snatched the hammer and ended Franklin’s life with a banshee shriek.

I took a sip of Diet Coke to wash the taste of stale meat from my mouth. “What are we going to tell our parents? You know, about our clothes and stuff?”

“Just say you were smoking and got rid of them,” said Abby.

“What about you? You don’t think yours will mind?” Abby’s parents were devout Pentecostal Christians who believed in corporal punishment. One time I had come over midwinter to discover her locked in their tool shed wearing only her underpants. I’ll never forget the look on her face as I pried the door open, her laughter opening her mouth so wide she could have swallowed me whole.

Inside the ball pit, the two children were still fighting. Their mothers struggled in tight jeans and discount blouses over wave after wave of brightly colored balls, crying out for their kids, who remained locked together, determined to tear the others’ eyes out. Everyone else carried on as though the fight wasn’t happening. Other children continued playing in the jungle gym, while their parents sat in booths nearby, busy with their own conversations. Even the employees didn’t seem to notice—hunched over their cell phones, smacking chewing gum.

Abby tore the corner off a napkin and dabbed some ketchup from my mouth. “They’ll do what they always do. Nothing different.”

My mom was washing dishes when I got home.

“What are you wearing?” she said, wiping her hands on her apron.

“What, you don’t like it?”

“I thought you were wearing more when you left the house this morning.” I waited for her to say more, ask for an explanation, but all she said was, “It’s getting cold outside.”

She was right: as the sun set, a chill had settled over everything. While I rode home gooseflesh coated my arms. The seasons were changing. I wanted nothing more than to crawl under my covers and stare at my phone until I fell asleep.

“Did you make dinner already?” I said, hoping to change the subject. My mom looked at me, then the dishes, trying to draw some connection between my question and what she had just been doing. Finally, she motioned for me to take a seat at the counter. “I have something to tell you.”

“Okay.” I noticed all the lights in the house were off. The sunset cast an amber glow, but already inky darkness had begun staining everything—blueish where we sat, getting darker the further you moved inside.

“Your father and I are getting a divorce.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

“How do you feel?”

My mom sighed. “How did you feel when you broke up with that little Abby?”

I didn’t know where she’d gotten the idea we had broken up. Abby was over at our house for dinner the other night! I wanted to correct her, yet something kept me from doing so. Maybe it was the dirt beneath my fingernails, or the fact that I didn’t know how I was going to get through school the next day. Maybe it was the age lines on her face.

Where was Dad? I wondered. Was he hiding somewhere, or had he already left, gone without saying goodbye?

“What did I feel when I broke up with Abby?” I said, mimicking the way our English teacher, Mr. Sullivan, repeated questions back to us. “I felt catharsis.”

My mom laughed and cocked her head. “Where’d you get that?”

“Something we learned in school.”

She nodded slowly, not totally understanding.

I got up slowly and made my way toward the stairs. For a moment I thought she was going to forget me, lost in her own problems – then she said “Wait!” and for the second time that day I felt like something exciting was about to happen.

Yet again, there was nothing to be excited about.

“If you’re going to smoke cigarettes, spray something next time. You reek!”

Later that night I texted Abby and Sammy.

You guys okay?

Sammy immediately replied: *Stuck on the trig homework :(*

A few seconds later: *Help!*

I decided to ignore him, as I had already finished the trig homework at school. Downstairs I heard my dad come in, his monster-walk giving away his drunkenness. He stumbled over to the couch and fell on top of it with a boom.

Cracking my door open, I peeked downstairs to find my mom, or some shadowy figure who looked and sounded like my mom, looking back at me.

“Everything okay?”

“Nothing for you to worry about.”

I hesitated, hoping she would tell me she was lying.

“Brian,” my mom said, her voice strained and tight. “Go to your room.”

When I went back to my bed I saw a text from Abby.

Save it wasn't from Abby: it was her father.

This is Mr. Evenson. I know you smoke marijuana with my daughter and take advantage of her. If I ever find out you two were together again, I'll cut your tongue out.

I walked to my dresser and set my phone down. My eyes felt heavy; I started to cry. Abby and I weren't together-together, not in the way my mom or most people thought, but we were *together*, in the sense that I loved her, and she sometimes let me touch her boobs. To think she might be harmed because of me pulled at my insides.

I struggled not to pick up the phone and explain to Abby's father what had happened. Surely he, a Christian, would understand the need to defend loved ones?

That was in the Bible, wasn't it—an eye for an eye?

We could have done nothing, suffered through another two years of Franklin's daily humiliations, or we could take matters into our own hands.

No one was going to save us except ourselves: that much was certain.

At some point I fell asleep and dreamt about Franklin.

I was carrying his dead body through the forest to the river. His body was light like an infant in my hands. A small, happy smile on his face.

The sun was shining and the air warm and balmy.

The leaves on the trees a brilliant, lacquered green.

As we got close to the water, Franklin's body began to change. His black hair retreated into his scalp until it was nothing more than peach fuzz. His muscles deflated; his legs shrunk. Words escaped his lips -- at first intelligible, then breaking apart into consonants, until only guttural clicks remained.

Yet words still swirled around me, carried by the wind.

I want... I want to be... I dream... I imagine...

I was crying again. Whether in real life or my dream was uncertain. Probably both.

I hated crying for this boy.

Crying for all the people he was and could not be.

Eventually we reached the water. I knelt slowly to the ground. When I looked at my hands Franklin was gone. There was nothing there. Just my palms upturned as though in worship, like I'd seen Buddhist monks do. I knelt there for a while, breathing deeply, trying to get the rhythm in time with the wind, letting my exhalations be drawn along the whispering of the trees.

When I looked down at my reflection in the water. Save it was Franklin who stared back at me. But he wasn't the same as just a second ago. He was my age again... older. His skin sagged off his face in doughy glops. Something had half-eaten his eyes, their viscous matter smeared across his face like make-up. He was laughing so hard his jaw fell into a gaping maw.

I woke up screaming.

My dad drove me to school the next morning. He looked okay: his eyes were puffy, but he had showered and put on a fresh suit. No mention about what happened the previous night.

"Did you have a nightmare last night, buddy?"

Not knowing what else to say, I said yes.

"Anything you want to talk about?"

For the third time, I had the same feeling of excitement. I thought about everything I could tell him: about Franklin's bullying, my fall in the forest. The dream I had.

Suddenly I felt incredibly lonely. Not because I didn't have anyone to share the experience with, but because we had experienced it in different ways—Sammy, Abby, and I. And would have to deal with the aftermath ourselves.

I could tell my dad what had happened, try to explain my reasoning, yet he wouldn't understand the experience of being there.

He would just have my word to go on.

"I'm sad you and Mom are getting a divorce."

I could tell from the way my dad's mouth curled he didn't believe what I was saying. Then he turned away. I realized he didn't want to know what was bothering me.

There was enough bad in his life already.

"I know buddy," he said finally; "It's just—... sometimes bad things happen, and it's no one's fault. It's not like your mother and I got married *knowing* we'd get divorced. We had the best intentions, and they didn't pan out."

"Why do anything then?"

My dad laughed and put a hand on my shoulder. "Buddy, if all of us went through life thinking like that, we'd never get out of bed in the morning."

If I was up for it, he said, we could go into the city this weekend to get some deep-dish pizza and see a foreign film at that one movie theater. I could even invite my friends. It wouldn't make up for what was going to happen, but it was nice to have one thing to look forward to.

He was right. Immediately any thoughts about Franklin, his brains splattered over the ground, his laughing corpse in the river, left me,

replaced by daydreams about the weekend. Abby probably wouldn't be able to come, but I could take Sammy. There was a cool John Woo film my dad and Sammy might like, and the thought of the three of us hanging out together excited me.

There would be time to worry about everything else.





the haunting hand of morality

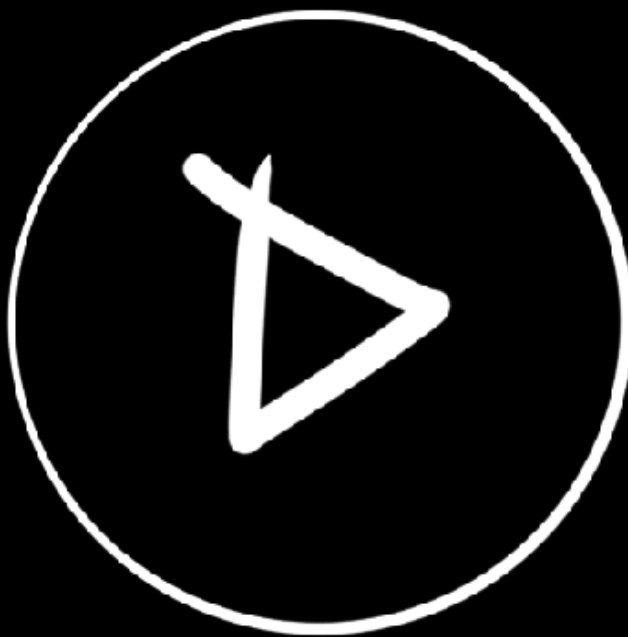
M.S. Blues

fourteen is a primitive age, you can say—
it is when we enter the stage of distinguishing
complex rights from complex wrongs,
and begin to develop questions towards
things that seem wrong, but were painfully
normalized growing up.

my first experience with this process was
jarring, daunting, deliberately bloodsucking.
call on dracula, why don't you? because what
my fourteen year old eyes saw sucked morality
right out of my excuse of a heart.

i saw my *abuelita* levitate—
but not (super)naturally. it was the work of an
angry hand that belonged to an even angrier man.

fury overpowered marriage, trust, and love—
and i witnessed it, just feet away, and did nothing.
muted by my own fear, i watched the scene before me,
while the haunting hand of morality rested on my shoulder,
reminding me that life is never beautiful
and that each frame of a picture picture
cracks, eventually.



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“Fealty and Destruction” by Nik Hoffman
X: @merkurymann
Substack: <https://acrossthespheres.substack.com/>

“Rot” by Juliette D’Angelo
Insta: @juliettedangelo
Bluesky: @julzdangelo.bsky.social

“A Hero Emerges” by Andrew Nickerson
X: @AndrewNickers19

“the haunting hand of morality” by M.S. Blues
Insta: @m.s.blues_

“Sky Violets” by John Swain
Website: <https://www.john-swain.com>

“Celebrating the 2014 return of a Pig in Shit to Newport, South Wales” by Michael Pollentine
Website: <https://linktr.ee/michaelpollentine>
Book: [Revealing Without Revealing](#) (ABP, 2025)

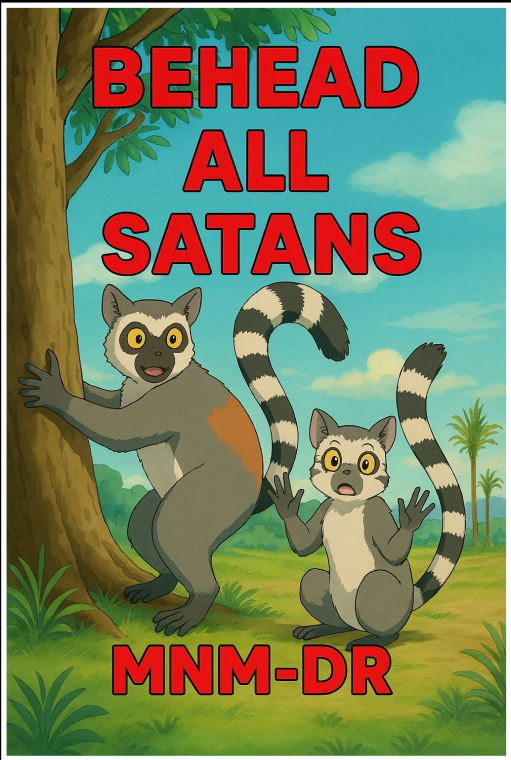
“Catharsis” by Jack Sullivan
Insta: @jacksully1393
X: @jacksully1393

ISSUE145 edited and ait art by Alex Prestia

ads



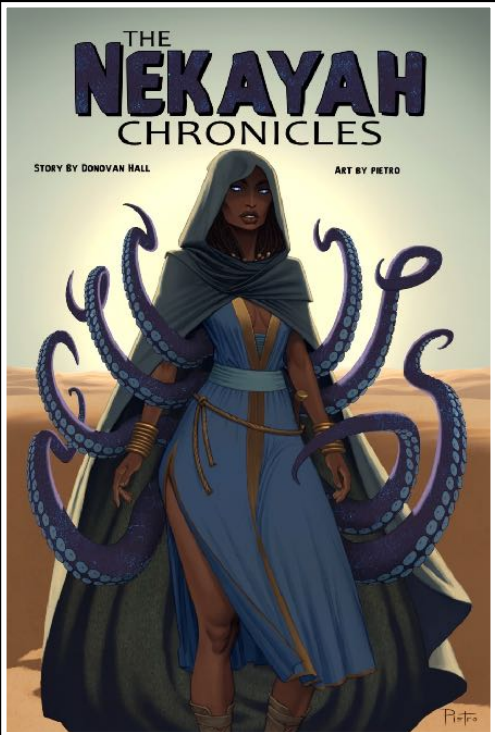
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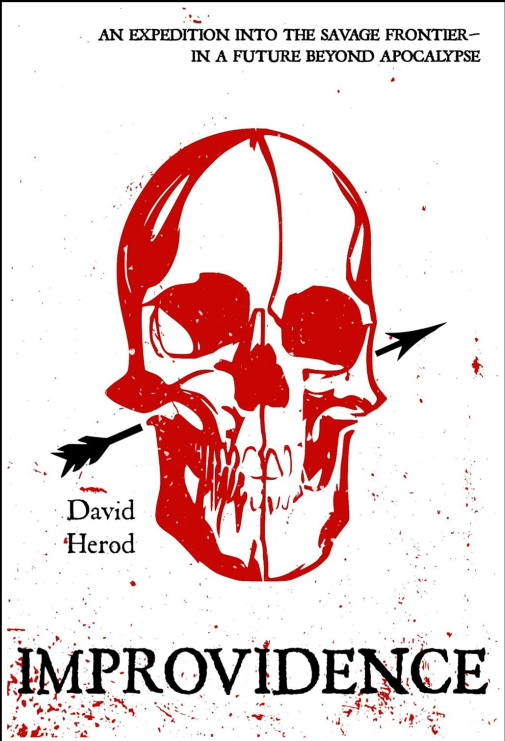
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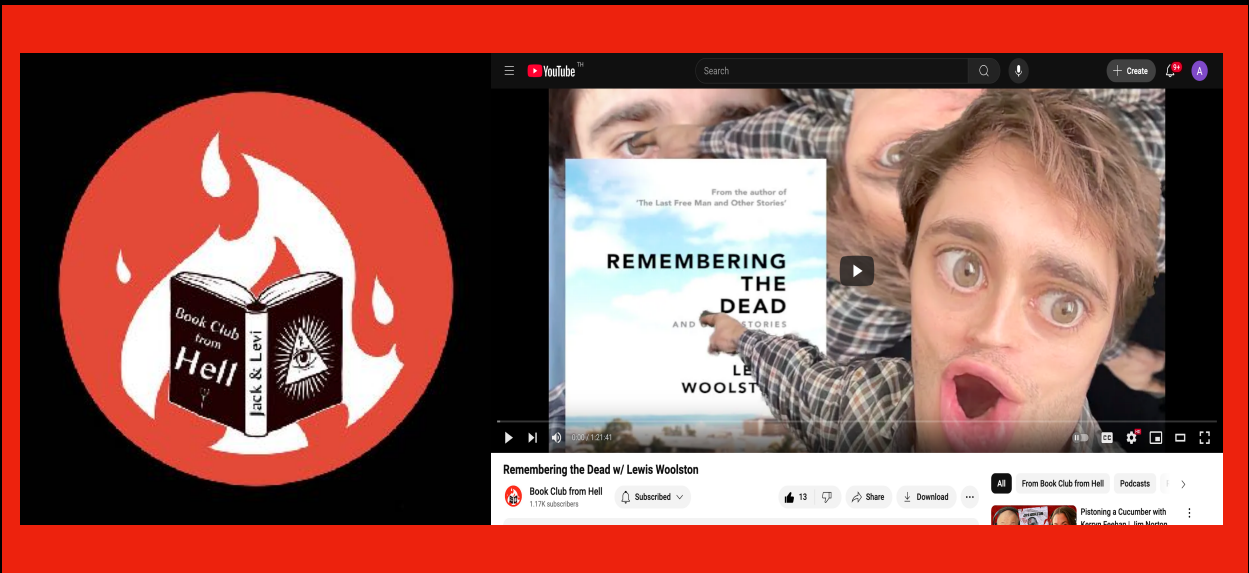
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