

## HYPNOTIC SISSY TRAINER #35 (2021 re-upload)

airport

instead of being cultured i'm watching superstore reruns again  
and eating a tub of delivery popcorn from the movie theater  
and thinking of you  
i've cum 4 or 5 times today  
twice to you  
and that's pretty impressive  
because you hold my focus  
much better than an x-videos addled brain  
should be able to focus  
BAMBI SLEEP!  
IQ LOCK  
the new modern problem  
it seems only ladyboys  
can get hard anymore  
—and some older western guys  
who still think fucking is a sin, but  
even that may just be tadalafil (or kamagra)—  
i'm lying on my bed—plastered  
missing you  
and thinking of you  
and netflix asks if i'm still watching  
and i still am;  
i'm going to finish this tub of popcorn tonight

# Surrender the need for success

Paul Ransom

To my fellow makers & creators,

Most of you, like me, will be working in the dark. Unheralded. With little or no audience. Nor much realistic hope of one.

In a world that measures success in dollars and followers—and that ascribes particular merit to such success—it can be tempting to chase the numbers. Either that, or give up. I can plead guilty on both counts.

But I have recovered, and here I am sending this open letter, posting it on the off chance it might find you. For I wish for you the same inexhaustible source of drive and desire that I have been lucky enough to find. I want you to keep doing what you do... and loving it. Not for the accolades, nor as heroic martyr fantasy. Rather, for the undiluted joy of making.

We have an ever-diminishing fund of time at our disposal, and no matter what we do (or don't) we will all—A list and Z grade alike—be equally dead. In the meantime, we have a choice. As creatives, as human beings, we can decide where to put our effort. Our focus. It



sounds simple, but for those of us who wish to make art, change the game, or bring fresh insight, it can be the difference between inspiration and frustration. Freedom and failure.

I use the word *failure* deliberately, just as I have *success*, because they may be variously defined. Yet, despite this, the loudest cultural mega-



phones continue to bracket them in terms of popularity, profitability and algorithmically mandated metrics. Like, share, subscribe.

Even the most resilient and determined of us can find such yardsticks difficult to ignore. To witness all your hard work vanishing into a fog of silence, a mere blip in the blogosphere, can be an acid test of self-belief and resolve.

Or not.

Although it feels cliché to suggest that we can switch out of the standard achievement mindset by recalibrating what success means, it nonetheless remains true. Extricating ourselves from the narrow channels of marketing-think and bean counting, and from the endless attention seeking churn of big tech playlists is a no-brainer. We already know this shit is toxic. Addictively so.

Our challenge is to make the cliché real. To break the habit of just *saying* no to the touch point mafia, and actually meaning it. Practising it. Living it.

Here we return to the issue of focus. We can spend our energy railing at the machine, virtuously demanding that the world change its ways, or



we can dial down the dramas of genius and grievance and dissolve our own judgements—which are so often more punitive and unforgiving than anything visited upon us by rejection letters and low view stats.

Surrendering the need for success begins with the surrender of *our own* success measures. As long as our pass mark is contingent on an outcome we do not control—or predicated on the lottery-win unlikelihood of fame, acclaim, etcetera—we condemn ourselves to a nigh inevitable sense of shortfall.

Likewise, if the worth of our work is calculated as a percentage of a perfected ideal—or assessed as the distance from an image of who we tell ourselves we have to be—we are likely to be left with the crush of perceived failure. In turn, this may morph into bitterness, even self-loathing.

From where I sit, this scans more as scam than sound investment. Either that, or a call to action. An invitation to change the prism and get out of prison.

To illustrate, let's use a dance metaphor. We can either fixate on good lines, great technique and flawless timing, or we can reside in the pure joy of movement. In how it *feels*, rather than how it looks or might be judged by others. The dance that is *felt* is always beautiful. The drive to dance, and the rewards of it, are located in the *movement itself*, and are not dependent on how good or bad we think we look in the selfie video.

The same can be said for book writing, picture painting and game building. Just as it can for restoring furniture, tending gardens, and a thousand other passionate pursuits. Surrender is here for all of us. It is not exclusive.

If that sounds a bit woo, allow me to offer you a personal example. Two months ago I started another book project. Even before the first keystroke, I had accepted that it would probably not find a publisher, almost certainly not be a breakout hit and, in all likelihood, not end up being the book I first envisioned. In fact, I may end up not liking it, nor even finishing it. None of that matters. *Because I have already experienced the joy and the beauty of spending time with my art.* The pay-offs are already banked. And there is not a dismissive literary agent or underwhelmed early draft reader who can take that away from me.

Same goes for this piece.



This is what it feels like to surrender the need for success. Liberation. Joy. A deep sense of personally authored inspiration. The desire to say yes in a world that yawns don't bother. Like Sisyphus pushing the rock uphill; not just because it's an act of defiance but because the act is an affirmation, a process of iterative uncovering. *This* is what I want. *This* is the ark of meaning.

Perhaps that strikes you as an excuse, a way for me to wash away the accrued disappointment of not being meritorious enough to crack it—maybe it is—but my goal here isn't to be right, it's to find a sustainable way to keep working.

Why? Because my practise puts me in flow. It gives me energy and grants me a sense of connection; sometimes even ecstasy and revelation.

But here's the kicker. Even this I could surrender. My work is not who I am. It is just a way to spend time. I love it profoundly. Truly, madly, deeply. Enough to let it go.

All of which cuts to motivation. Reasons to keep going. When we decouple our passion projects from socially visible, financially denominated rulers of success—and from personal mantras of perfectionism, crusade or noble suffering—we clear a space for freedom of choice. From there we can make work fearlessly, because the act of making is where the 'success' is. Meaning, healing, self-actualisation. Whatever you want to call it. Or simply *just because*.

Or indeed not. For we are also free to stop.







## randomicity

Scott C. Holstad

nighttime  
the pain returns  
rippling mind effects  
disunity lust  
objects found  
like shower breeze  
curtain waves in  
disdain like purple  
bruise spoiling pink  
handflesh made  
rotten by thought  
conjecture pure  
terror in the heart  
not hate  
the pain  
bowls one over  
rolling in  
wave upon wave  
crashing down on  
a beaten psyche  
disjointed love  
turns evil with  
the night.



# Mango Lid

Pravasan Pillay

There was a jar of mango pickle in our fridge that we could never get open. The lid would spin around and around as if its thread was gone. The jar had been in there forever but my father forbade us from throwing it out. He said that there wasn't anything wrong with the lid—we just hadn't turned it enough times to get it open.

In the evenings, after work, my father would sit at the kitchen table and turn the lid on the jar until he was satisfied he had done a decent day's turning—usually an hour and a half.

As I got older it was part of my share of the household chores to also turn the lid. Later, my father developed carpal tunnel syndrome—and I was left to do the lion's share of turning.

When I turned I would, as per my father's instructions, focus on the lid and nothing else. If he wasn't there, I would read the label on the jar.

The label told the story of the owner of Stadium Pickles, Mr Nitin, whose family had been in the mango preserving business for decades. The business had been passed on from father to son until it grew to be



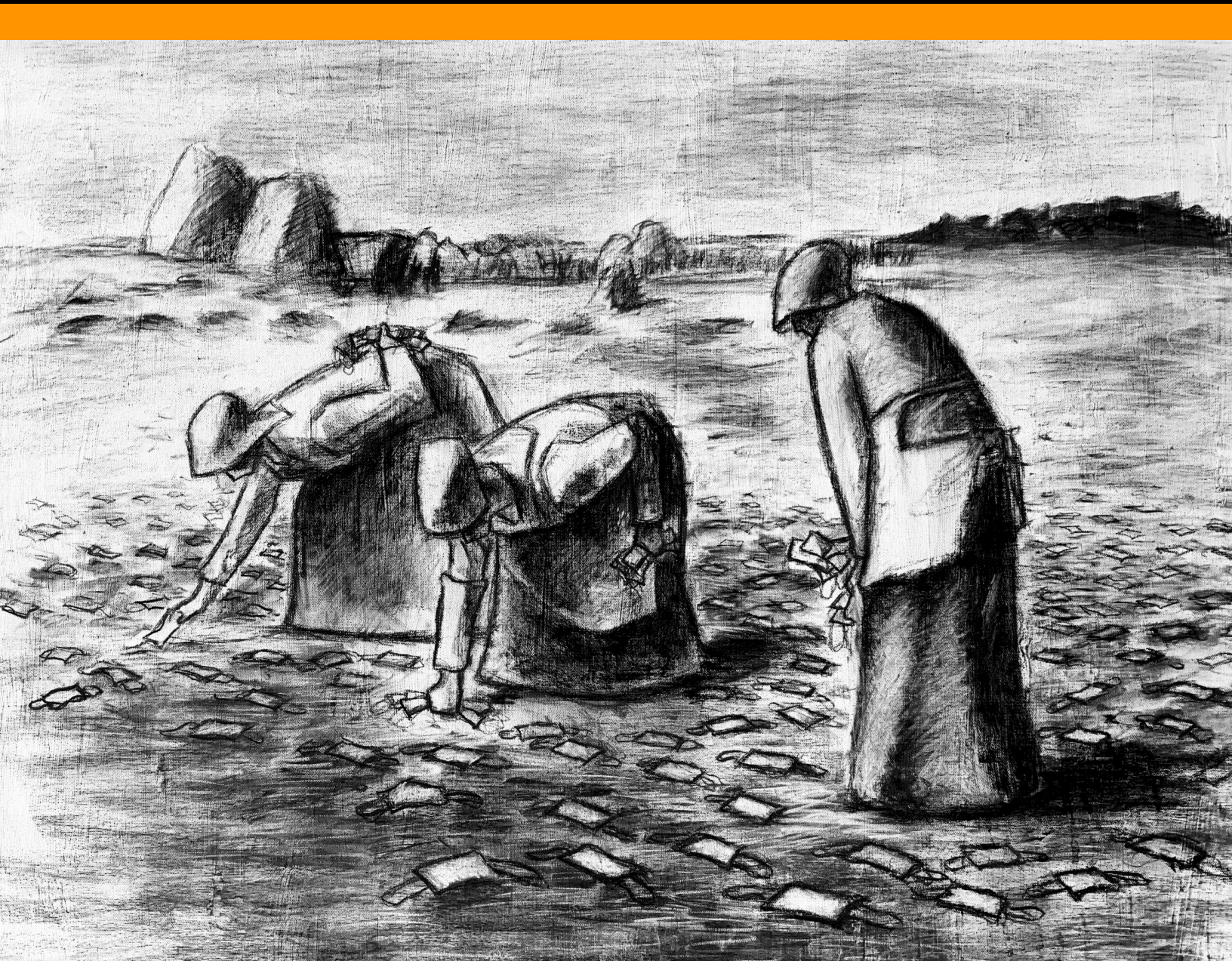
one of the most successful in Bombay. It was later expanded to a factory in London, and it was while on a visit there that Mr Nitin came up with the company's motto, "Go, Man, Go!"

I surreptitiously read the story of Mr Nitin many times in our small kitchen in Durban while working the lid. Sometimes, I would ignore the label for a few months, so that it would be fresh in my mind when I read it again.

I never worked up the courage to turn the jar around to read the back label, but I figured it probably only contained a list of ingredients. It was not worth the risk of disobeying my father to read it.

However, on the day of my father's retirement party at the tire factory, I was alone at home, and I decided to do just that. The back label listed the ingredients—as I had suspected—but also the following instruction, "Turn lid to open".

I smiled when I read that, and realised that my father's life hadn't been in vain. And I knew that one day I, or my son, or my son's son would finally open the lid and get to taste Mr Nitin's mango pickle.







## Something Short

Jean Liew

Break the vices by which I am chained –  
Forced to stumble and trod  
In these same steps again (and again)  
Until the ruddy silt coats my knees  
Until from the dusty haze I can no longer see  
Smash the restraints so I can be free  
(Please)





## my people

crumbles

They just want to be right  
Because their whole life was a deny

They just want to possess  
Because their whole life was a void

They just want to criticise  
Because their whole life was a rivalry

But they are just living too  
In the nutshell they were given to



# my first crush

Cate Herrold

My first boyfriend's name was Ethan. He had moppy brown hair that fell into his deep brown eyes, and we met at the beach. I created him on [Girlsgogames.com](#), my own little Frankenstein. Of course, he was just a stand-in—a meal replacement for the appetite I couldn't yet satisfy.

When I was 12, all I wanted was a boyfriend. I would never admit this to anyone, because I'd spent my entire childhood thus far swearing up and down that I would never have a crush, I would never date, and I would definitely never get married. My relatives smirked and informed me with certainty that this would change one day, which only made me more insistent—I would never, ever be in love.

But what they said was true. In 6th grade I had my first crush—the sporty, blonde Tyler S. I kept the crush to myself, not only to protect my pride, but because he was shorter than me. I was tall for my age, and the top of his head just barely reached my chin. I couldn't help myself—if loving Tyler S. was wrong, I didn't want to be right.

Then he got a haircut, effectively dousing the flame.



Besides, life moves fast and I had my eyes set on a new guy. He was known to my friends and I by the codename ‘Spiderman,’ because I saw on Facebook that he dressed as Spiderman for Halloween one year. We had all our classes together—was it true love or the exposure effect? Either way, I was obsessed. In my journal I wrote down every interaction we had and every piece of information I could gather about him. I wrote about the time he noticed my new backpack. And the time he said something funny to his friend in art class. And the time I left my book behind (*The Clique: Best Friends for Never*) and he ran after me to give it back, and I blushed bright red and denied it was mine because I was embarrassed to be reading *The Clique*, but I took it anyway and said I’d try to find it’s rightful owner. I memorized the best route from my house to his (which I looked up in the phone book) so that in case he suddenly asked me to come over to his house, I would be prepared.

Then in autumn, a miracle happened. He and I happened to be at the town common at the same time (a coincidence, I swear) and we sat on the gazebo steps and talked as the sun set for two whole hours (but who’s counting?). We exchanged stories about school, our families, our childhoods. I had new facts for my journal and new material for my daydreams. Nothing in my life had yet to compare to that feeling of ecstasy—when my mom drove me home I felt like I was floating in the passenger seat. I vowed I would never forget the date, and I haven’t—it was October 26th.

In my fantasies, he wanted to know as much about me as I did about him. He comforted me after fights with my parents. He wanted to know my opinions about everything. He listened to the music I liked and read the books I recommended, and was very impressed by my good taste. I imagined how we’d get together—maybe he’d build up the courage to talk to me at a school dance, and inevitably we’d end up swaying to *Two Is Better Than One* by Boys Like Girls and Taylor Swift, and maybe he’d put his hands around my waist and tell me what I’d been dying to hear—that he’d been thinking about me this whole time too, he’d just been too intimidated by my beauty to make a move.

My mom said it was hard to be a girl at this age, because girls matured faster than boys. They want connection, *real* relationships, she said. Something that boys aren’t equipped to give.

I asked, when can I expect boys to mature?

She said, I’ll let you know when I find out.



This discouraged me greatly. Not all boys were the same, surely. I hoped Spiderman would prove her wrong.

On the day of the school dance, I struck up a conversation with Spiderman after class, hoping he'd get the hint. But instead of asking me out like he was supposed to, his behavior toward me was chilly. He wouldn't look me in the eye, and walked a step ahead of me in the hallway. Our classmate Gemma passed by, and he ditched me to go talk to her.

That night I saw them slow dancing in the cafeteria. I could feel my heart drop all the way down to my stomach, but I didn't cry. I couldn't believe I'd worn my best Hollister dress and Delia's sandals with him in mind, only for him to betray me like this. I denounced Spiderman and vowed I'd never give him another chance as long as I live. I cursed Gemma's name, that evil, evil slut. She'd probably slow dance with anyone who asked, and also her hair was ugly.

Nowadays, Gemma and I are both dating women. We aren't friends, but we like each other's Instagram posts. I got my wish for real connection, though it doesn't look like how I thought it would when I was 12. As for Spiderman, all I know is that he has bleached blonde hair now, and let me tell you, he isn't using toner.





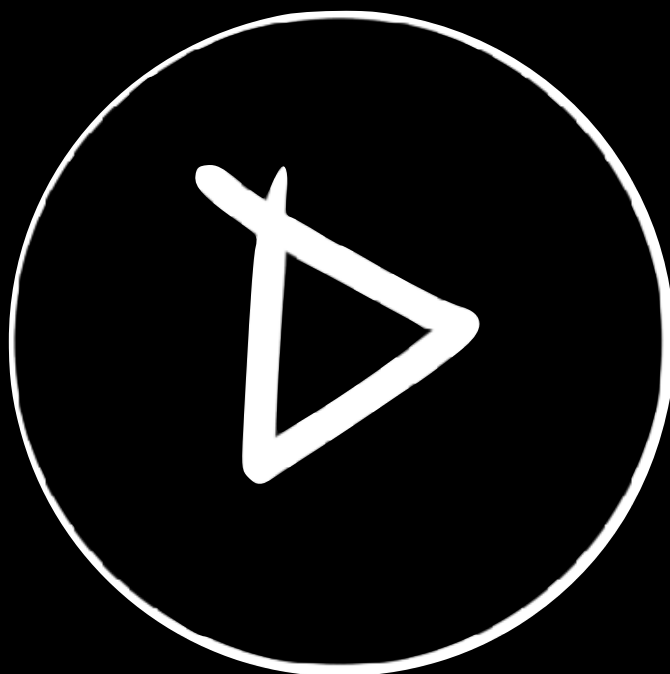


## Paradise Lost

Salvatore Difalco

What to make of this life  
drawn with melted crayons  
and the tongue on the frozen  
fence telling its own story.  
One longs for a ladder with  
enough rungs to reach heaven,  
that cottony abstraction  
tripping the neurotransmitters  
that trigger nostalgia.





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“Surrender the need for success” by Paul Ransom  
Website: <https://asifyouwerelistening.com/>

“randomicity” by Scott C. Holstad  
X: @tangledscott  
Website: <https://hankrules2011.com/>

“Mango Lid” by Pravasan Pillay

“Something Short” by Jean Liew  
Jean Liew is a rheumatologist and clinical researcher in Boston, MA. She began writing about 30 years ago, with a period between 2007-2009 when she produced the bulk of her juvenilia.

“my people” by crumbles

“my first crush” by Cate Herrold  
Insta: @cateherrold  
Substack: [catethoughts](#)

“Paradise Lost” by Salvatore Difalco  
Book: [The Mountie at Niagara Falls \(Anvil Press, 2010\)](#)

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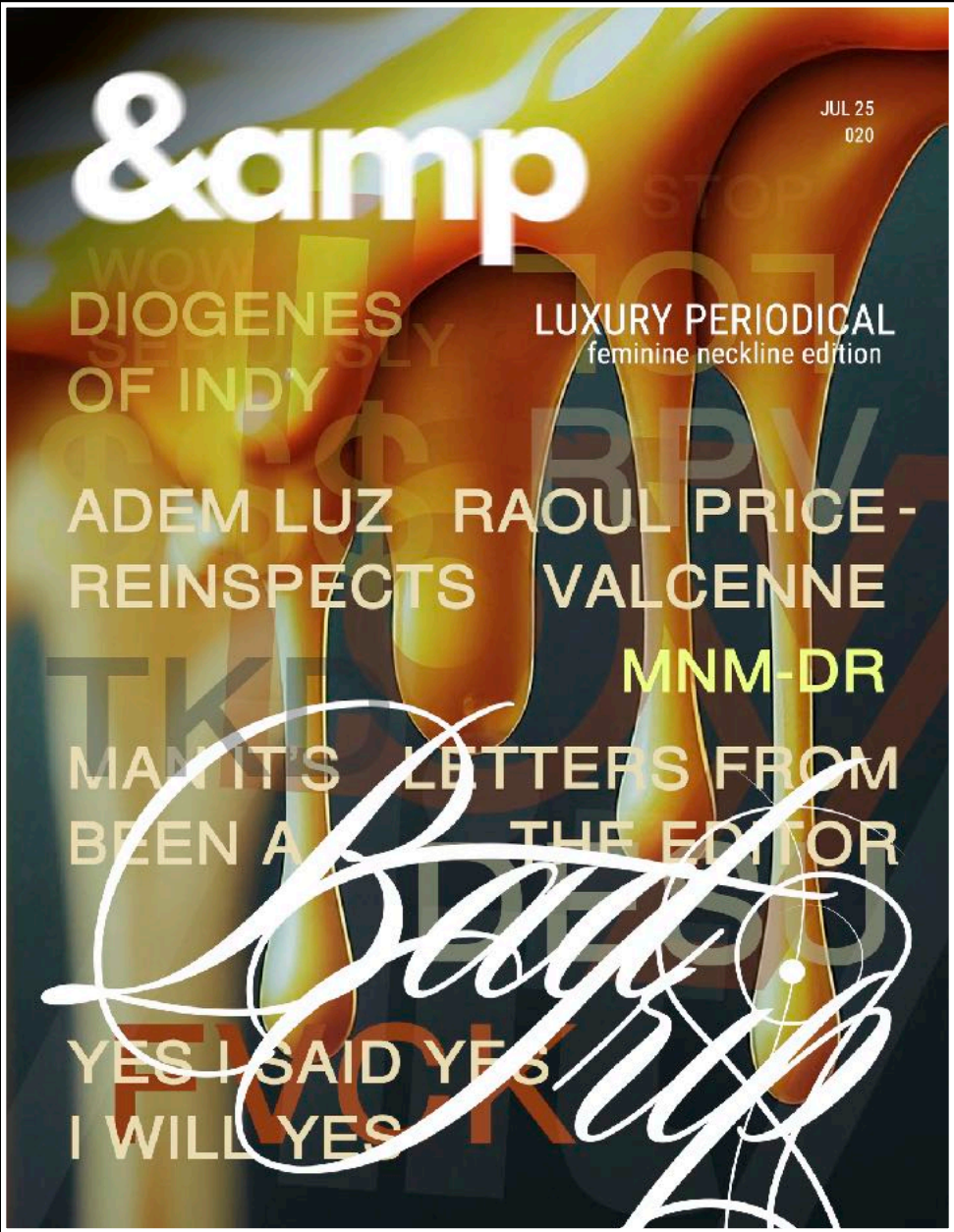


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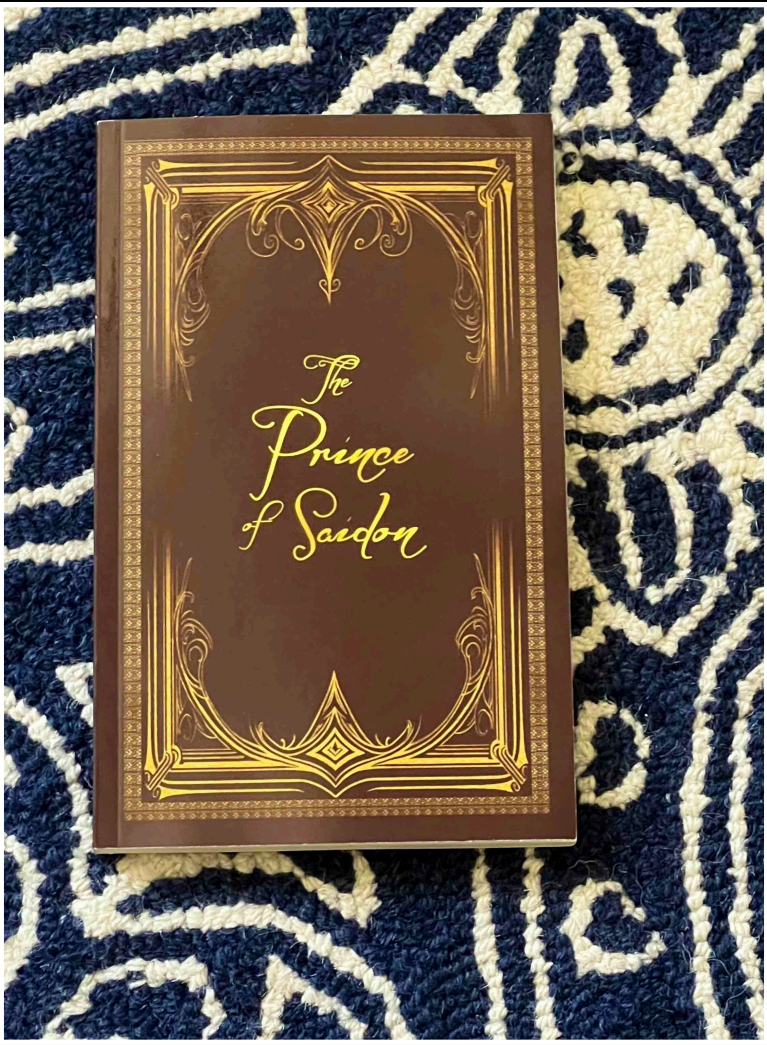


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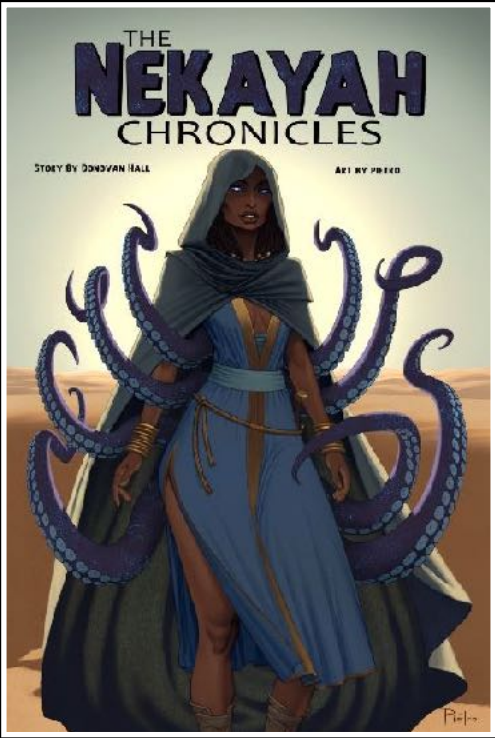
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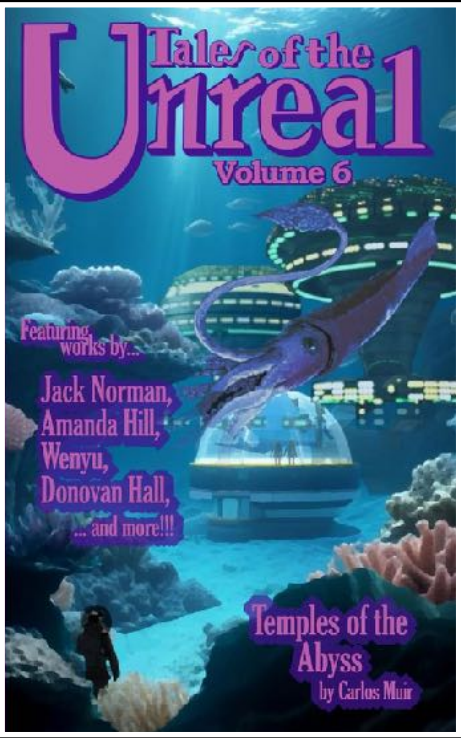


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