

# miniMAG

*issue161*

*tie-dye abduction*







## Dogdays

John Swofford

no elephant is too interesting—  
this one, a male, would crowd any room,  
and, as such, we lead him out by his tail  
we're all thankful for the orange  
on a bluebird's breast,  
reminding us of nature's grace

i have no icon to deface,  
no effigy that I've carefully built  
just to burn—i went down that road,  
inspired by Michelangelo,  
who didn't want people to know  
how hard he had to work—

now we go on our merry way,  
like a photon that goes exactly where  
it wants, and we, the people,  
are deposed. Pulling on your

nightgown, thinking, of course,  
that, as my wife, you'd better  
put out—that's the problem for  
everybody; we have to agree

equally charged. A mouse scurries past—  
there's no way for me to catch him  
so i try to accept him,  
I have no plans to buy a mouse trap



it's Easter, now, the new year passed,  
I was totally egging the wrong people on  
i knew they'd suffer to see their state,

an atemporal position called retirement,  
when you have to live with yourself,

and bad choices litter the canvas  
these are the dogdays of summer,  
let the minstrel sleep,  
maybe he's depressed by the company  
he keeps—or, perhaps, he doesn't want  
to go through with it,

make up for the stars—  
let us, then, absorb the sweat  
that would make us look bad  
when we're on the air,

delegating to the various weathermen  
who's in jeopardy, and what needs to go  
where, they take me as seriously  
as I take them—we're going nowhere,  
i'm lost in the hem,

stitched up like a jogger denied  
their two hour buzz that leaves them  
to themselves, much like retirement  
so we go to sleep—start over fresh,  
and then our lives, our jobs, our friends  
make sense: we strive to be better,  
out of the road, doing for others







## Like a Bad Neighbor

Doug Stoiber

I was doing my best to skim through this bright little novel  
When a knock on my door caused me nearly to spit out my tea  
My neighbor next door stood awaiting his next chance to grovel  
At my feet, begging that I permit him to watch my TV

Poor bastard had managed to render his own unrepairable  
Accidentally (!) discharging his pistol at very close range  
Toward the screen when it showed something so mind-corroding and terrible  
That he reached for his TV remote to hasten a change

But instead, this poor sap grabbed his sidearm and squeezed off a volley  
With a deafening roar and the shriek of electronic demise  
Now his bullet-holed set sits curbside, evidence of his folly  
And the desperate desire of a starving man haunting his eyes

“I could sure use an hour or so of news, traffic and weather  
“Or a couple of game shows, old westerns, or even a soap  
“Let me just catch a season or two of ‘The X-Files!’ However,  
I just smiled as I gave him the finger and pantomimed, “Nope”!







## The Garden

Will Vincent

drifting in the triangle between weeds, the telephone line, and Jupiter, I am  
to imagine my death.

I am buried alive in the stranger's yard.

I claw at the plywood like a squirrel gnawing under-ripe avocado.

gnawing at something that's supposed to be soft.

a leaf falls and it is the worst animal.

my love is here and her death song is a moose howling itself inside out.

fields close around us like we are bowling balls falling through sheets.

blue puppet hands grab at our ankles.

like sea vultures the crabs come.

I am among the orange flowers crawling the cold earth in the garden.



I do not know their name, but let them be called bugleweed.

I am squeezed through the gates of heaven like mozzarella through mesh.

the angels do not know me.

it is cold under the earth and wood.

I am feeling close to death—sexy and futile—like being choked.

the computer scientist is coming for me with his link chain.

to beat me cold with his rockets and nukes.

we are just that near the end.

always the skin falls away like old clothes.

as they pile on the soil, there is my slow crawl over the earth.

in little flashes: a joke on a popsicle stick fading into cherry red syrup.

I remember the kid who paid me to make him laugh.

I hear my father's callouses over the guitar.

I remember my brother asks for another rendition of moon shadow as I drift  
into another night terror.

refused from heaven like I'm cheap cheese.

leaf particles and sawdust under my fingernails.

a twitch in my toe.





# Don't Think Twice, It's All Right

Kit Terrell

Comes a time

I suppose

Choked up

Moses

Comes a time for a man to break free

I suppose

Choking on the dirt to smell the trees

A mans gotta be his own Moses

Comes a time

I miss Moses

Froze up

A mans gotta turn away from the light every once in a while

Comes a time for a man to find his way back

I suppose Moses felt like that

Chomping at the bit

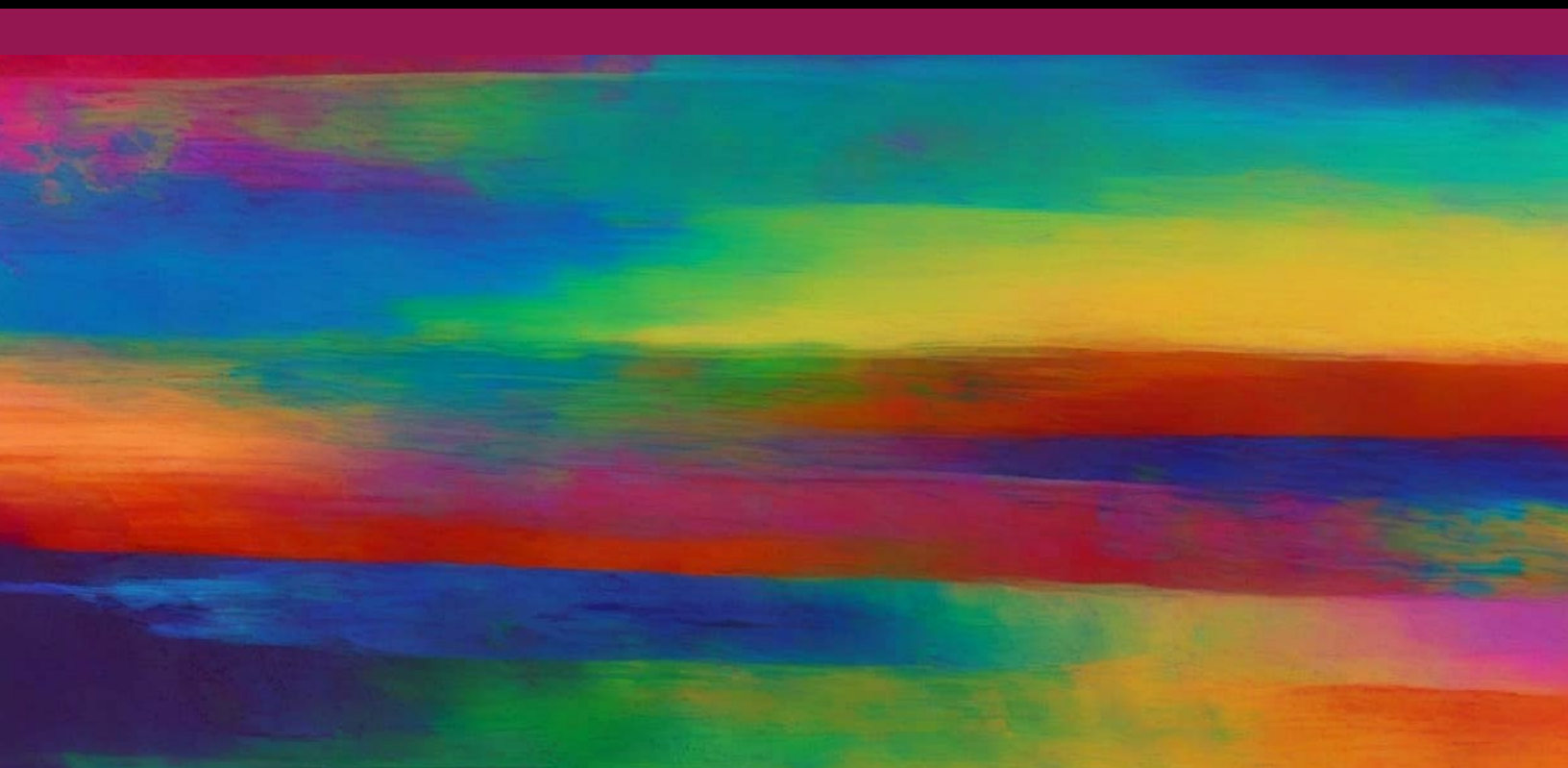
A mans gotta makes his own way sometimes, I suppose

Comes a time for

I suppose

Choked up at the sound of a melody you know you'll only hear once

A mans gotta find his own way out here







# Wizards of Leisure 2

airport

“Whenever I’m in a quagmire, I sever my hand to consult my squires,” says Gurlak in his low croak, the crunch of paper, the soft lick, and he has finished rolling his famous froggy spliff. “A hybrid and some rose petal, the forlorn sailor has lost his mettle,” it is impressive how Gurlak deftly moves his frog man fingers to roll his smokes, even more impressive considering none of those fingers are thumbs.

He passes the finished joint to Magnifico Miller, who snaps his fingers to produce a tiny flame. Gurlak does not like to handle fire and sparks are a cantrip that Magnifico can cast without his bowl. “A most suitable roll, considering I am a wizard without his bowl,” says Magnifico as he sparks the roll with this little cantrip he could still control.

Sitting cross-legged on the splendiferous lilypads of Gurlak’s damp floor, the two delight in jocular word games, wit to wit and spliff to spliff—Gurlak rolling and puffing, rolling and puffing; Magnifico pouting and puffing, pouting and puffing—until the doorbell croaks and they get up to see who it could be:

Minerva Bustier, neighbor and avid researcher, haughtily standing with her long Chinese pipe, stiff chopsticks in her jet-black hair, and a tight black and gold qipao raising from her thighs to her shoulders.



*Mysticism suits her*, thinks Magnifico, *but rather, everything she does suits me*, and with that he lets out a rather ponderous sigh that Minerva, no doubt, notices. She places her hand on his chin and stares deep into his eyes with her dark brown rubies,

“Well—that rather won’t do, I hope it does turn up soon, my poor poor Magnifico,” scratching his chin, knowing exactly what he has lost before he can utter a vowel, and then breaking off into soliloquy about her studies: “I have come to find, through my research—summarily completed in the deepest of archives, of the wayest backest, blocked and mined, and ultimately esoterically hypersafe perusal of the /lit/nomicon—that those scrolls which garner only eight reply posts and gnary three-to-four illustrations, are often the deepest, most philosophical, extraneously competent, and intelligent moral discussions on the deep-governing treatises of various parts of literature, philosophy, and the aesthetics of arts as a whole.”

“Yes, Minerva, it is so,” replies Magnifico, lost in her swirling scarlet eyes.

“The truth of the king is lost in the rabble,” croaks Gurlak. The wizards are floating on little clouds she has conjured and making great aims to light the joint she has plucked from Gurlak’s hand.

“So my humble, supple, grumple companions, with that I am adieu—but do not fret my sweet, sweet Magnifico, I see your struggle and empathize so. I shall, upon returning to my tower, conjure up the Old Boards and consult for hours. With time and this joint, I do declare, that we shall find the answer you seek, and to you return your bowl expeditiously. But failing that, a quest I shall bestow and you my friend, on your own or with your friends, must go,” And with a poof and a puff of sakura scented smoke, Minerva Bustier, with the freshly lit spliff, poofs back to her tower and away from them.

“But I didn’t even tell her where I lost it,” Magnifico moans.

“Trust the finders to find and the seekers to seek, the chivalrous knight returns to his seat,” says Gurlak.

“It’s as if I’m in a fever dream, but luckily for us, Francisco Ferdinando Federico’s home is just through this dainty marsh.” And so they set out, wizard and frog, frog wizard man and man wizard, hopping from smooth stone to lilypad in the muddy marsh on the way to their friends home, whom with this mess, they verily trust.







## Gone!

Sunil Sharma

A shadow over the  
red tiles  
flits over the chimney

a tiny dark companion  
of  
an airborne dot

with wings  
against  
a brilliant sky, gone in  
a blink, merging with the  
red-eyed dusk.





# Government Business

JS Apsley

“It’s Government business,” spat the obese toad of a man, with his drinker’s eyes below expensive spectacles, and his full-blooded lick-spittle lips.

For hours now, the old Govan Iron Works had been under the shadow of an unknown drama. Homes and shops up and down Dixon Street were being emptied; evicted. An armed guard had appeared, pacing the boundary of the derelict site and surrounding streets.

Henry Dirk had worked the smelt, man and boy. He was cleaning the dirt out of his broken fingernails from those days even now; even now he was an old bugger with his best days long distant.

He knew the *Dixon’s Blazes*, as it was known to the locals, had endured its last bright heat of fire in 1958. Henry had also helped de-commission the site in 1960, and if there had been any dangerous materials left down there, they would surely have been nicked by some local entrepreneur decades ago. It was a dead site; consigned to history, and best left there. *Perhaps*, Henry thought, *like me*.



But this evening, after decades of slumber, the Iron Works was positively brimming with life. Dozens of police officers had appeared to create a blockade and, unusually for Glasgow, some of them were armed. When officers chapped the doors up and down his close, Henry kept his lights off and he sat quietly, ruminating. So, an hour or so later, he was quite positive he was the last resident in the tenement, and allowed himself a wily grin when he spotted three black vans with sleek black windows pitching up at speed; a careering convoy. The armed guards waved the three vans inside the yard.

Henry watched from behind his dirtied net curtains as two Government-type bods spewed from each car. They bustled inside the iron works, in their black suits and white shirts, each carrying odd little briefcases. *They characters look like tax inspectors, no' the polis*, Henry thought.

He lit a cigarette, though he had promised his daughter and granddaughter to give them up, wondering if the Government had uncovered some old gift from the *Luftwaffe*, left behind from the blitz. He crouched at the window, opened a bottle of malt, and sipped it with his jazz records for company as he watched from behind those grey, netted curtains.

It was now *A Love Supreme*, *Bitches Brew*, and *Sinatra at the Sands* since the inspectors had entered the ironworks; and deep night was upon the streets like a cold blanket. Henry had just placed his beloved *Headhunters* vinyl on the turntable when he caught movement. The inspectors, or whoever they were, frogmarched out and across the old yard. But there, with them, was someone... *new*.

Henry stubbed out his cigarette and finished his whisky with a flourish. The man being escorted was a very odd character indeed. Strikingly tall, Henry noticed his trousers were far too short, and his jacket sleeves were riding up near his elbows. *Have they dressed that lanky bas'?* Though it was night, the tall man was wearing sunglasses, and looked very poorly; pallid even. As they stalked towards those black vans with their glossy windows, the tall man was continually licking his lips, and Henry felt a shudder run down his spine like a rinse of cold water. There was something very odd about that man; very odd indeed.

Then, they all, tall man included, disappeared into the black vans... all save one. Henry was not for lurking anymore. He rolled up his window, and hollered down. The last man—an obese toady fellow with



a ruddy complexion—was taking a last look around, hanging over the top of his driver’s door.

“Find anythin’ fancy doon there pal?” Henry hollered.

The fat inspector looked irritable, trying to find the source of the shout.

“Up here pal! It’s Glesga—look up!”

The man looked up, and spotted Henry. He pushed his expensive looking glasses up his squat little nose. Henry saw him swallow; to control his tone.

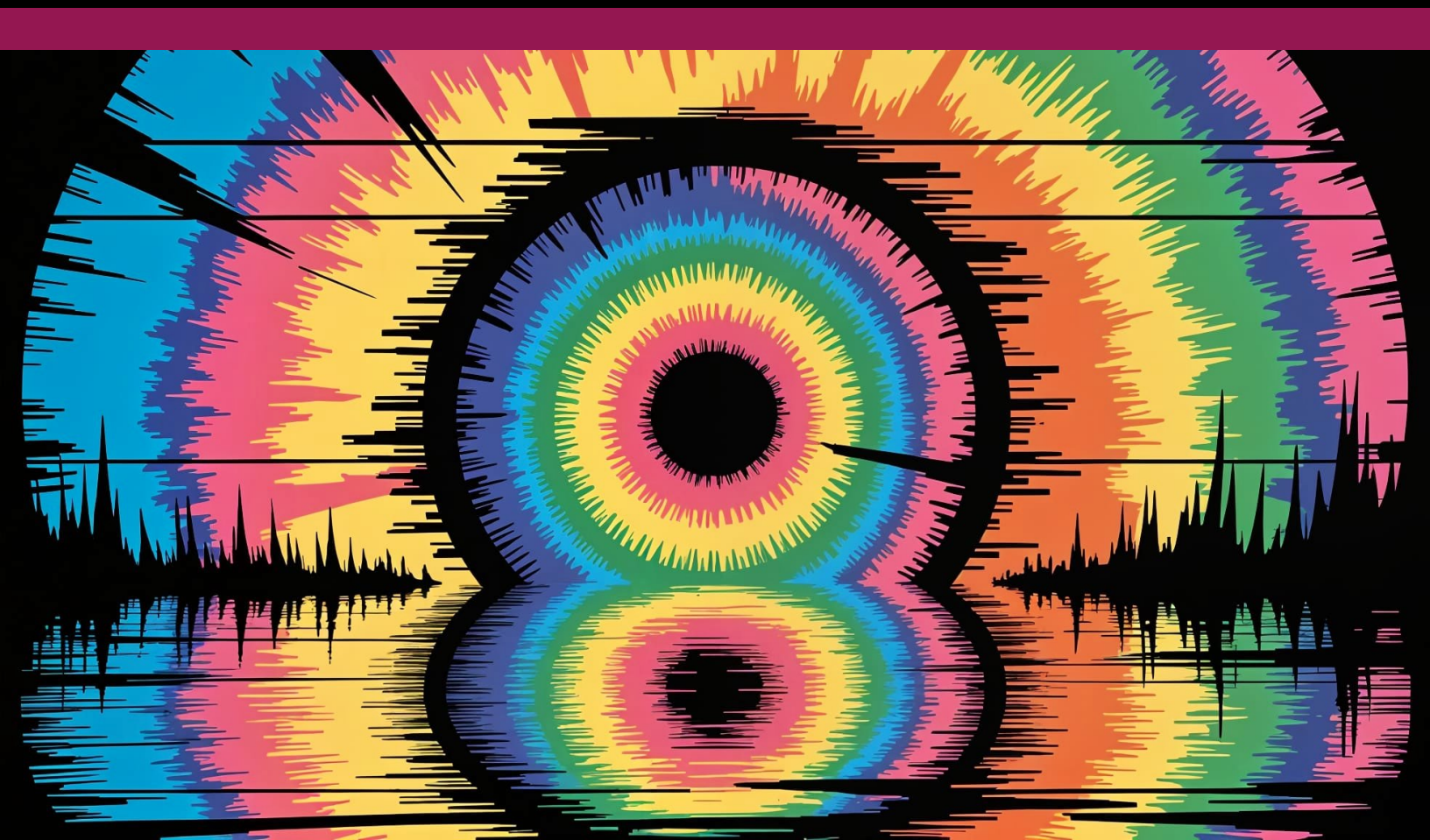
“Nothing at all sir, nothing to worry about. It’s all clear. Sorry if we disturbed you. It’s just Government business,” the toad said haughtily. He nodded to one of the armed guards, and stepped inside the van. The convoy scarpered, wheels spinning, just as quickly as they had arrived.

Henry gurned with a “pah!”; and closed his single-glazed window with a rattle. As he sat, he found he could not shake image of the tall man, licking those strange white lips of his.

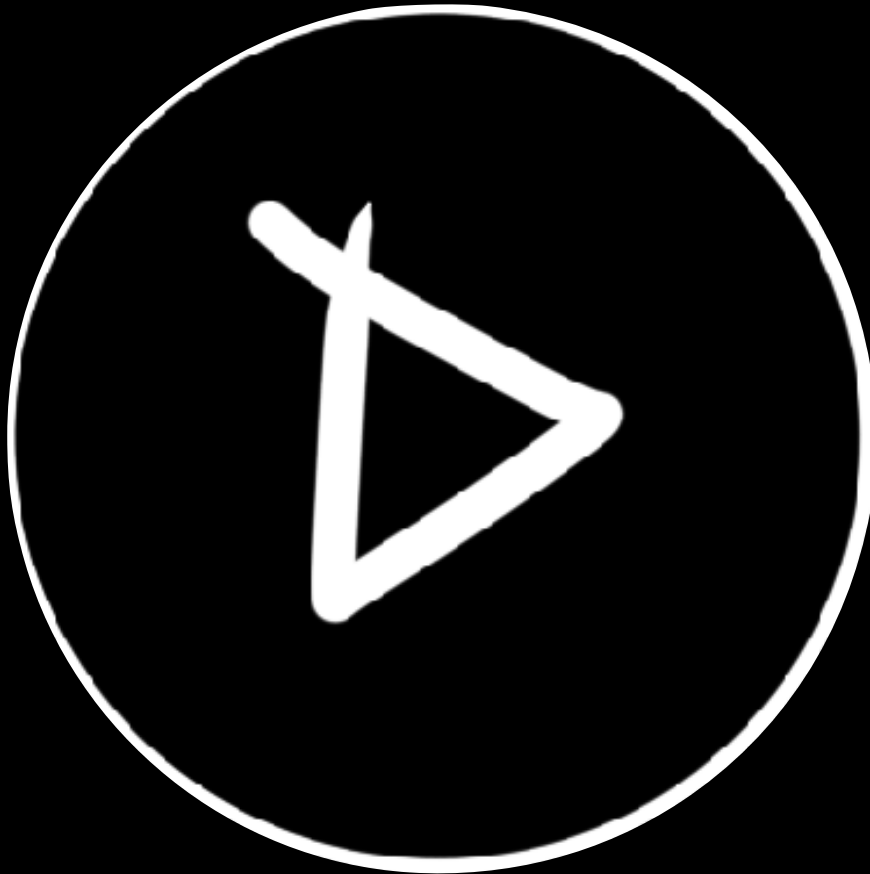
He poured another whisky, and allowed himself to lean back into his records. *Whitev’r this carry oan wis aw about, it’s above ma pay-grade.* Yet, it *was* all rather odd. He had watched six men in crumpled black suits go in; seven had come out. It was as if the tall man had been done there, in the dark of the iron works, for decades.

Henry shook his head, and lit his next cigarette.

Government business, indeed.







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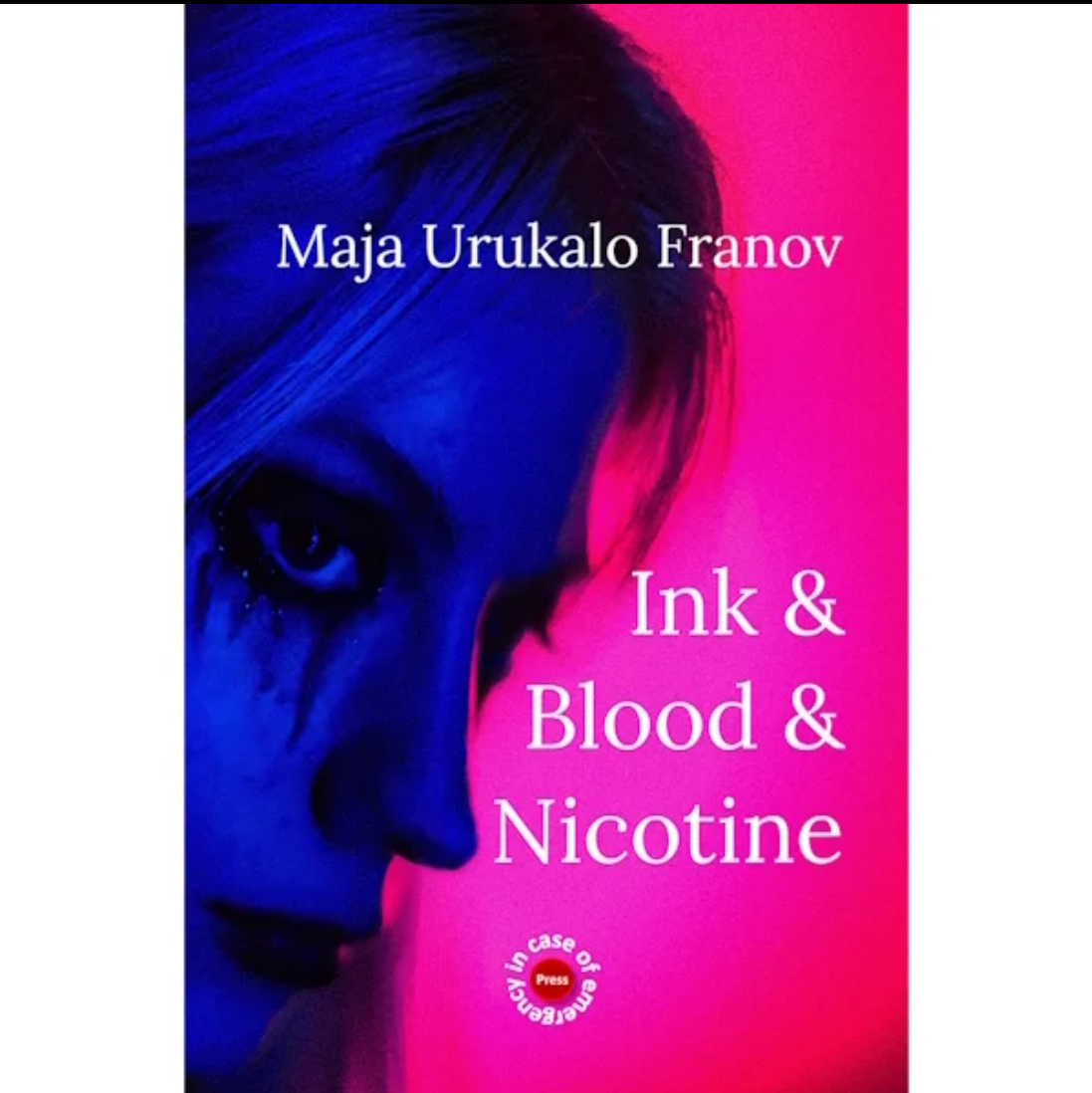


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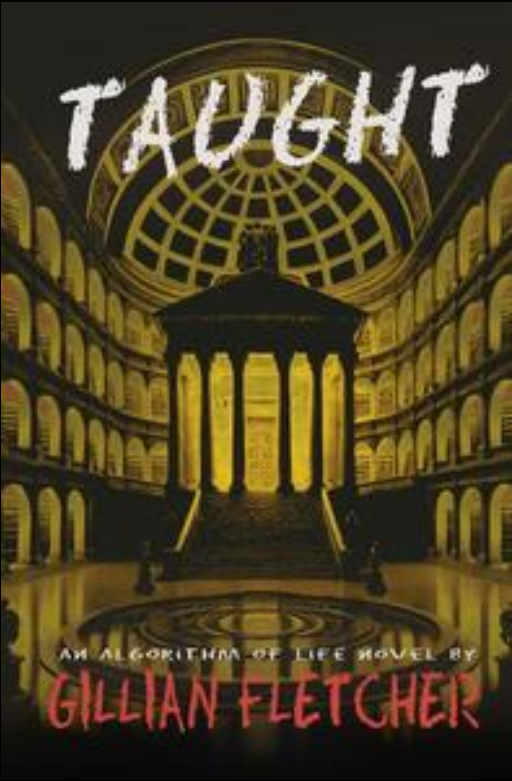


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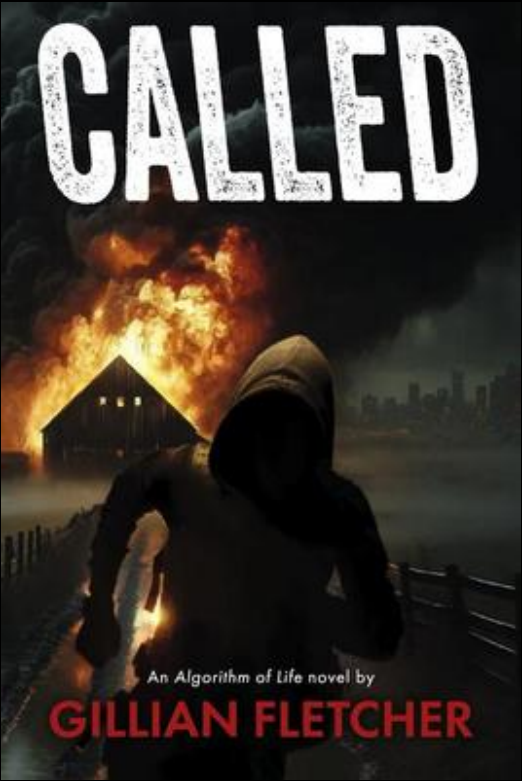




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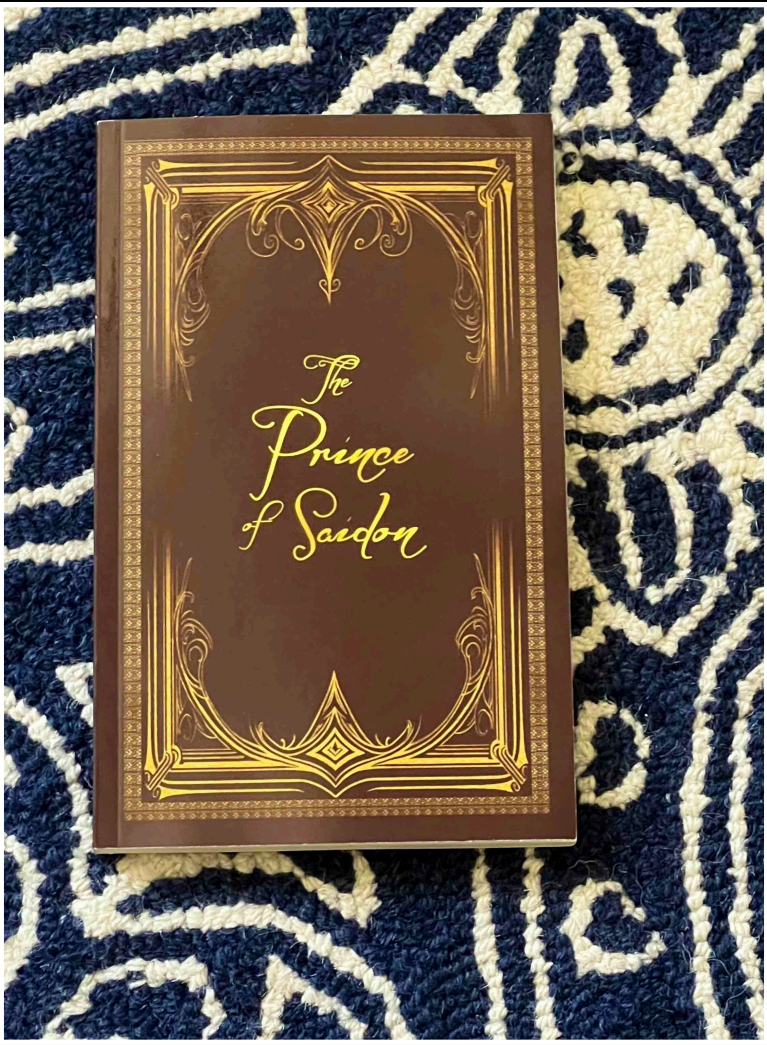


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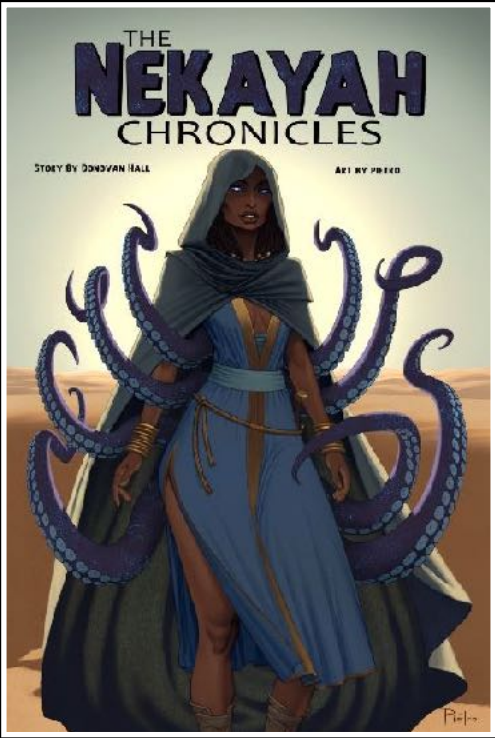
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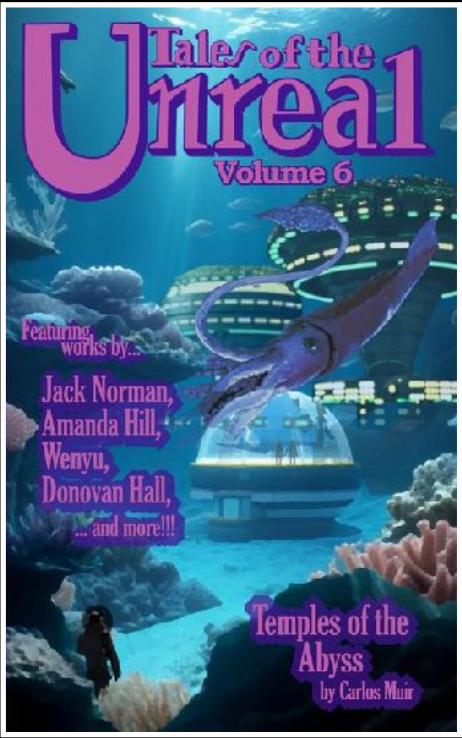


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