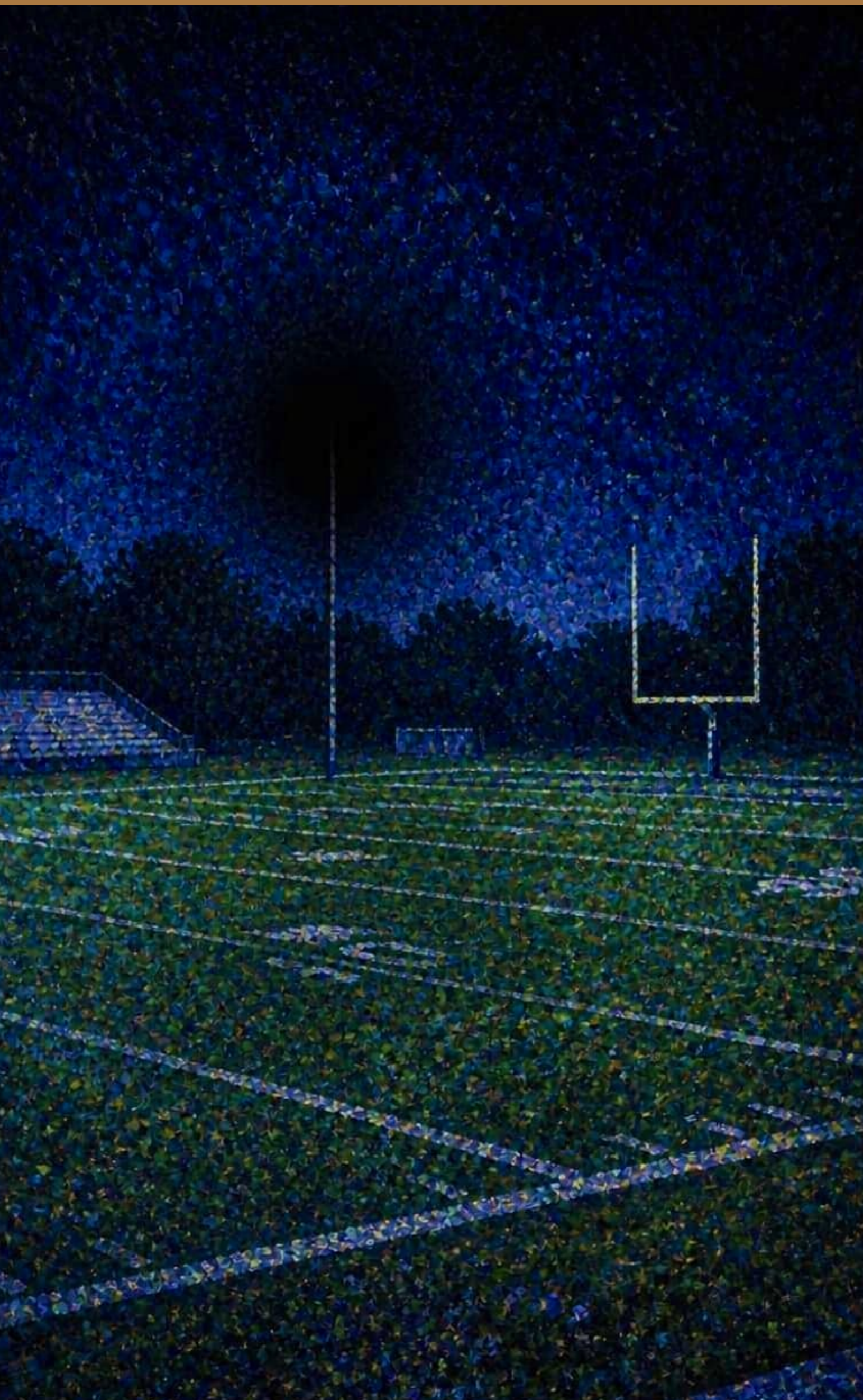


**miniMAG**

*issue203*  
*american football*





## The Keeper of American Culture

Claire Christine Sargenti

“It doesn’t get more Americana than that!” he exclaimed, while slamming a leathery fist down on a plastic sheet protecting an 1881 issue of the *Tombstone Epitaph*, reporting on the now-historic gunfight at the O.K. Corral. He had made the same remark about a pair of spurs dating back to a similar era, an oil painting depicting wild horses, a badge that had belonged to the first (ever, supposedly) police chief, an elaborately constructed silver and turquoise bracelet, film negatives from some famous photographer I had never heard of, and a beautiful mask expertly crafted by a member of the Hopi Tribe.

I had wandered into his little shop situated just off of Route 66 more than two hours ago, hoping to get directions to a coffee shop with working WI-FI. The owner was an old-timer—a word I’ve never used before and will likely never use again, but somehow seems infinitely perfect here. He jumped into action the moment I walked in the door, showing me every single item in his shop. Each one came with a story to tell, and he always ended each story with his favorite phrase “It doesn’t get more Americana than that!” When he ran out of merchandise, he began to tell me about the history of his town, the shop itself, and his own personal history—how he had fallen in love with his now-deceased wife back in high school, back when all the kids would hang out at the Dairy Queen. He began closing up his shop, still immersed mid-story, when he stopped to ask if I would be willing to roll around in the sheets with him for \$50. Then he smacked me on the ass and declared “It doesn’t get more Americana than that.”



# A Good Punt Falls Steeply

David Chamberlain

He was an American football punter and he could punt the ball very far. When he was a kid, they'd all line up—The Punter and his friends—on the edge of the quarry and he'd launch balls and rocks and stuff high into the bright empty air. The rocks would hang there, vibrating in space, dancing, and then tumble back to earth, hitting the granite with a sad distant crack.

Now he could send a pigskin nearly through the uprights from the opposite end of the field. His punting leg was very muscular, had veins like extension cords. He was the pride of his otherwise very mediocre professional team. He united his community. He volunteered in youth outreach programs. His fans lauded him. “Jerry The Jackhammer” they called him. After games, he would autograph photographs of himself for giddy children.

He was also the object of a lot of amorous attention: he was handsome and talented and moderately famous. Over time, he found he had somehow developed several serious girlfriends. This was very stressful but important for him to maintain. The Punter, typically a man of great self-control, had trouble restraining himself in matters of the heart, or, more truthfully, matters with women. He couldn't say no.

He had a great hairline.

The Punter had animal-based nicknames for all of his partners: Bunny, Bear-Bear, Kitty, Butterfly, etc. This helped him compartmentalize the relationships, keep everything straight, organized. And they

were all very happy relationships. He was very complimentary. He listened. He'd bring them wine and flowers without being asked or anything. In the bedroom, his accomplishments were prodigious and highly enjoyable for all parties concerned.

One day the manager of his team told him, sadly, that he'd been traded, was going to a real bulldog-type organization back East. They paid a lot to get him. He should be proud. This sort of bungled the dynamic he'd been maintaining in his romantic life. He'd have to break up with a lot of people. Lot's of goodbyes. Lots of womanly tears.

The break-ups were sad—really pretty devastating, actually—but they were necessary for his growth as a player and human person. All the ladies were very understanding, showed a remarkable inner strength and maturity that made The Punter proud.

His new team was based out of an icy metropolis that had rattly public transit and very loud, very unhappy fans. The Punter was able to quickly earn their respect with an 80-yarder right down their rival's throat. He got the hang of things. He did his job. He was seriously pretty amazing to watch, honestly.

The new city also presented new romantic opportunities. It was chalk-full of all kinds of women The Punter hadn't previously encountered: women who wore suits and who walked fast. Serious types who read books and used words that were all business. He liked this.

Weeks into his new assignment, The Punter started seeing a tall brunette professor of philosophy who taught at the local ancient Ivy-League college. She wore tortoise-shell glasses and had big frizzy hair and was just generally beautiful in the way only tall women with glasses are beautiful. She had cute bangs.

She taught The Punter how to think. She filled his empty noggin with new ideas. She introduced him to the French Post-Modernists: Foucault, Derrida, Sarte. She taught him about the great feminists, about Bell Hooks and Angela Davis. About Neo-Colonialism. About the whole blundering system of The West. The imperial tyranny of his beloved United States. She even told him his very sport was barbaric, caused brain damage, and championed a new form of slavery: the despotic owners used players like chattel. He listened. He indicated that he was listening by nodding slowly and saying, uh-huh, uh-huh.

They started going out seriously. They ate oysters at ornate restaurants with low light. They walked down the city's crowded streets hand in hand wearing very fashionable clothing. Paparazzi snapped bright photos of the couple, their long legs frozen mid-stride. The Punter ceased seeing any other women. He was in love.

As The Punter learned more from The Professor, his thoughts changed—literally became more sophisticated and multi-layered. And as his thoughts changed, so too did his vision of the world. Before,

things were blank and boring, clear and rectilinear like a football field. Now everything was twisty and colorful and full of hidden meaning. What's more, the more sophisticated his thinking became, the deeper was his capacity to love The Professor. He'd never felt anything quite like it. It was pretty astonishing, like free-falling into a mine-shaft and hitting motherlode after motherlode.

The Punter couldn't think of anything other than The Professor and her voice and her strange ideas. This affected his gameplay. He started doing really weird stuff. In games, right when his team needed a miracle, he'd punt the ball sideways, or backwards, or right into a lineman's ass. This wasn't on accident. This was a form of protest, an act of defiance against the whole inequitable system. More importantly, it was his way of showing The Professor the magnitude of his love and devotion.

The fans didn't like this very much. Neither did his teammates. The team owner called him a traitor and a jerkoff and a dolt. He lost his job. This was hard for him. The Punter had only ever known punting. He



spent his now empty days watching mob movies or sitting in on The Professor's lectures, slouching in the back of the class, giving the evil-eye to any student who looked too interested. He walked around the park by himself, picking up sticks and pretending they were machine guns. He made machine gun noises by rolling his tongue. He'd shoot at squirrels and small children. Die! Die! he'd whisper. Football fans would pass by and call him a cocksucker or a retard. They didn't understand.

This went on for months. Other teams courted him, offered him spots, but he spurned them and their exploitative ethics. He lived off savings. He ate peanut butter sandwiches almost exclusively. He grew out his hair, stopped clipping his nails, started making a point of burping a lot.

The Professor grew distant.

One night, The Punter woke to the sound of his front door being knocked down. All of the women from his former life appeared at his bedside: Kitty, Bear-Bear, Butterfly holding a crow-bar. They had all learned of each other and they were upset. They pinned him down and tied him up. Then they went to work on him, on his punting leg. They twisted his knee-cap around like a doorknob. They drove railroad spikes through his tibia. They un-hooked his hamstring like a bungee cord. They really kind of tortured him. He tried to remember what The Professor had told him about The Stoics, about Epictetus and Aurelius. He tried to remain strong.

He passed out screaming.

He woke up in the hospital, his punting leg gone. Surgeons took it off right near the groin. A doctor came in, motioned to the nothing where his leg used to be.

Sorry, son, he said. There really wasn't much left of it.

The Professor came to his bed-side, tears in her eyes. In his drugged-out delirium, The Punter thought she was an actual angel. He asked her right then and there if she would marry him. The Professor sighed, looked at the floor, and said no. She told him he didn't stimulate her, intellectually speaking. She told him she had fallen in love with a grad-student, a young woman, who could recite all of *The Brothers Karamazov* by memory, in The Russian. She wished there'd been a better time and place to tell him, that the circumstances were different. She hoped he'd get well soon.

How do you know she's reciting it? He asked before she left. You don't speak Russian, she could be saying gibberish.

It just sounds right, she replied.

He could still feel his missing leg, it felt like a pillar of dry-ice.

The Punter was discharged from the hospital. He went home and got really into drinking.

He stacked pyramids of empty vodka bottles around his apartment. In the afternoons, he limped onto his balcony and shouted at the people below like a Biblical prophet, arms out-stretched, facial hair wild and long, his voice snarly like an angry dog's.

He tried to distract himself from the pain in other ways, too. He tried getting into wood. He studied different kinds of lumber, deciduous vs. coniferous. Hard vs. soft. This did not work. He learned to despise wood. It made him very hateful. He developed strange anxieties. He

became concerned with temperatures. I.E., how long a hot cup of coffee would remain hot. He would set a mug of hot coffee on his counter and stick his finger in the coffee and count the seconds until the coffee became cold. He did the same sort of thing with ice cubes, watching them slowly lose their shape and then disappear entirely. He knew there was something about death tied up in there.

He got a prosthetic leg. It was clumsy and stiff. It made him feel like a pirate with a peg-leg. He'd saunter into his local bar and shout something like: Arrgh, me mateys!

He grew very fat and very unhappy.

The Punter decided he would win The Professor back. He would do this by becoming more intellectually stimulating. He studied, read voraciously. He gained a good understanding of Marx, could talk surplus labor value and alienation. Could identify the deficiencies in Adam Smith's whole thing. He deciphered the Hegelian dialectic, knew the *Tractatus* inside out, frontwards and back. He could tell you interesting anecdotes about David Hume or Heidegger. He birthed an entirely new interpretation of J.S. Mill's functional utility. He could tell you how Oliver Wendell Holmes and Ralph Waldo Emerson were more than just contemporaries, they were friends. He could describe to you, in detail, how Nietzsche influenced Freud who influenced Jung who influenced Neumann who influenced Camile Paglia—a feminist who is, as we all know, very controversial. He would talk about these subjects in the mirror, holding an imaginary champagne flute, pretending he was at a big gala or something—a place where people wore Prada.

On a cold Tuesday morning, The Punter stormed into The Professor's lecture hall, interrupting one of her large survey classes. He stomped down the auditorium steps, his prosthetic clanking loudly, his belly wiggling out from under his shirt, his beard stained with mustard and wet with gin. As he charged toward The Professor, he recited the opening lines to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, shrieking: That all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt!! Strings of phlegm spewed from his mouth. The students were frightened, frozen. One student actually gasped, like actually put her hands over her mouth and everything. The Professor immediately called campus security. The Punter was detained.

A restraining order was filed. The Punter was charged and fined. He even spent a couple days in jail. During his time there, he learned about the calming effects of barbiturates and opioids—his cellmates had smuggled in a pharmacy. He wondered where he could find more once he was released. His cellmates were happy to point him in the right direction.

The Punter started supplementing his drinking with drugs. Then supplemented his drugs with drinking. Then promptly lost everything.

He fell into the dark nooks and crannies of the city: alley-ways, abandoned buildings, under freeway overpasses.

He did manage to get in with a strange group of people—weirdos who wore lampshades as hats and picked off their own scabs and ate them. They stole things and fucked each other right on the street. He quickly fell out of favor with them after he tried to break up a fight between their leader and some poor teen girl.

His prosthetic leg was stolen out from under him by a pack of shirtless delinquents carrying skateboards. They found The Punter sitting against a dumpster and yanked the leg right off him. They played with



it in front of him, used it as a prop. They pretended it was an electric guitar, a giant erect penis, and a unicorn horn. Then they hit him over the head with it and ran away laughing. He. He. Ha. Ha.

The Punter hopped and crawled. He slithered. He scooted on his bum like a dog with worms. He cried a lot. He mumbled and spat and moaned. He barked at people, sat on street corners and waved repeatedly like a Disney animatronic. He shook his fist in the air. Cursed God. He lost a remarkable amount of weight, became a leathery skeleton with a missing leg.

He decided he needed a new leg. He fashioned a makeshift prosthetic out of a broken broomstick and some electrical tape. It was not good. The end of the broomstick stabbed his nub, irritated it, created open sores, wounds. The wounds were painful. They festered and got goopy and hot and leaked thin greenish fluid like a runny nose. They grew very infected, looked like a lumpy dish of spaghetti bolognese. Eventually, the wounds turned black, gangrenous. He got dizzy and started to shiver. Sepsis was setting in.

He slept a lot, had feverish, jagged dreams. He dreamt of his life. He saw his grandmother playing bridge, her face tattooed like a Maori warrior's. He saw a football flying through a black space that was unidentifiable but was assuredly the black of death. He stood on empty

football fields, the faces of his parents vaulting over him like the shadows spewed by a campfire. A ferocious defensive-end he knew tapped him on the shoulder and then embraced him, kissed him passionately and then turned into a girl he knew from high school who had very ugly teeth and who had earnestly loved him which had made him hate her. He pushed her away and she spiraled up into the air like a helium balloon, screaming for her life. He found himself punting the disembodied head of his nephew across a chasm that he knew led to heaven, a place where blue light was spraying out from the sky like from the eye of a projector. The Professor showed up, told him to kneel—they were in the colosseum—and then spoke to him in a language he didn't know. When he told her he didn't understand, she laughed wickedly and ran a spear through his chest. Spectators roared. Thousands of hornets swarmed him, flew inside his ears, dug into his canals like buzzy coal miners. Then he was back in his high school's state championship game—he was a senior, a varsity player. It was night and the field lights were on and the grass smelled brightly and the crowd was wonderful and his girlfriend whom he knew he wanted to marry was in that crowd somewhere and his team was winning but only barely and this fact was very exciting and amplifying and he felt exalted to be a part of something so perfect. The smell of churros and hot dogs drifted across the field and steam rose out of their helmets as if each player were a machine with a mighty engine powering them and the ball was snapped and it flew anxiously into his shaky hands like a child finally falling into his father's lap and he stepped forward and cranked that son of a bitch with an explosive release more powerful and magnificent than any orgasm and it rocketed high into the night air, above the light of the field lights, into an abyssal darkness, before falling back into the view of the light like Christ himself returning with the whole host of heaven. The punt returner misjudged the distance, was clobbered on the fifteen yard line. A punt that gave his team the field position to win the championship. Then his leg was suddenly gone and he was on fire.

He'd wake up shouting.

He woke from one of these dreams to a man with tattoos standing over him. They were in an abandoned train depot that echoed. Birds fluttered around the rafters. The Punter was curled up in a corner, mumbling to himself. The Tattooed Man knelt beside The Punter, whispered to him, told him that The Punter was magic on account of his missing leg. He said he needed to extract the magic from him. He pulled off The Punter's pants and tried to massage his privates. The Punter fought him off with a couple well placed punches, but was left gasping and injured and very, very tired.

He decided it'd be good to throw himself off a bridge.

He hobbled toward the city's one bridge famous for people jumping off of it. It was 16 degrees and the wind was blowing needles of ice.

He stood on the edge of the bridge and looked down at the water far below. The water looked solid, like wet concrete. Like sidewalk after a heavy rain. This is where all of those great philosophies end, he thought. All of that intricate fancy talk added up to this: a great big nothing. Zero.

He noticed a little pebble sitting on the ledge there. Holding onto a girder for support, he kicked it with his broomstick leg. It flew into the air with ballistic speed, a bullet flying high toward the vanishing point of the horizon, rising, inching up in altitude as if moving under its own source of propulsion. Then it gently descended, following a calm rainbow arc toward the river, carefully hitting the water as if it were placed there deliberately. As if it were preordained to find its terminus right there in that colorless gray patch of water. All things are this way, he thought. He laughed.

A long quiet woosh and a final quick splash. Plop!





## **gibraltar is a series of bytes on a usb somewhere in irvine**

airport

supports get wiped out;  
play of the game,  
I'm medal ranked—not my fault  
there's an excess of infrastructure,  
i could use a data center to myself,  
put me in coach; oh, to be the only worker  
between rows of white-hot servers

hitscan dps complains, "tank diff"  
when the streets were expanded  
lane-by-lane another, another  
empty parking lot, another, another  
ugly store, parking lot, another  
empty lots everywhere, land covered in lanes  
i only understand mid-lane  
I am only comfortable with the team  
at my back; on my back

why can't I live in  
the rent-a-center,  
why not sleep  
in the kohls?

we could all be together in the strip mall  
live together in the combo-nation-pizza-hut-taco-bell  
we could kiss in the panera, where they used to bake bread  
get baked at target, make ourselves starbucks upfront  
push the payload down the aisles of hobby lobby  
give counterpick advice on the 5-below loading dock  
raise a family in the staples office furniture section  
pass away peacefully in the sephora breakroom  
respawn, staggered from our team, at cabela's  
rebuild ourselves at lowe's



## **Kansas isn't real.**

Shawn Scott Smith

It's not Missouri.

A snowfall on your lips,

Breathing in.

And out.

Take the Jayhawks to the final four again,

No one knows where Lawrence is on a map.

I fly a jet over your plains,

Grass and lumber,

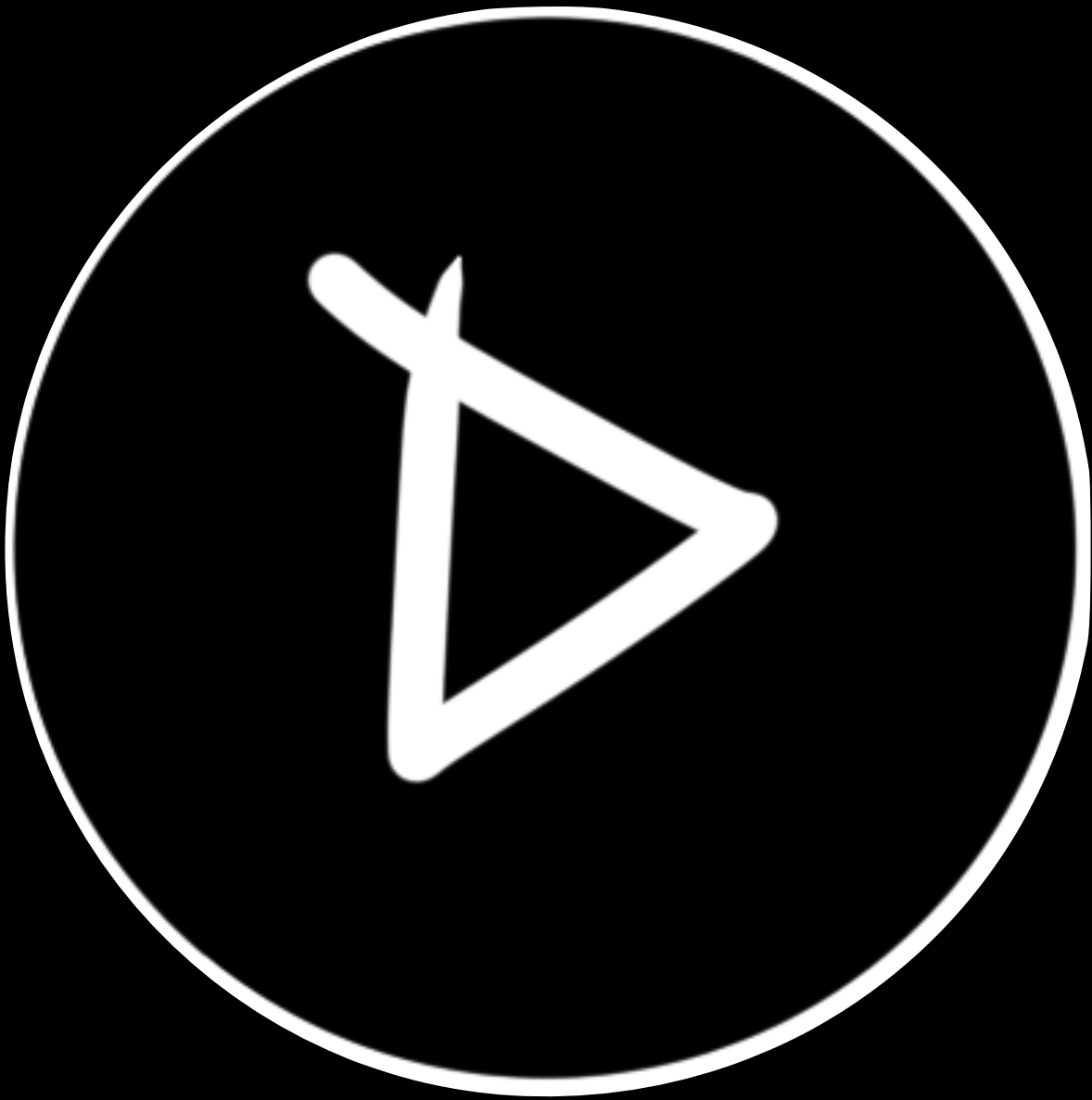
Take me home,

Slip the sheets over my cold body,

Let me tell you about the border war,

Cross Kansas off the list,

Listening to the Get Up Kids on a broken turntable.



url: minimag.press  
subs: minimagsubmissions@gmail.com  
substack: minimag.substack.com  
twitter: @minimag\_lit  
insta: @minimag\_write  
book: <https://a.co/d/8bTfxxI>

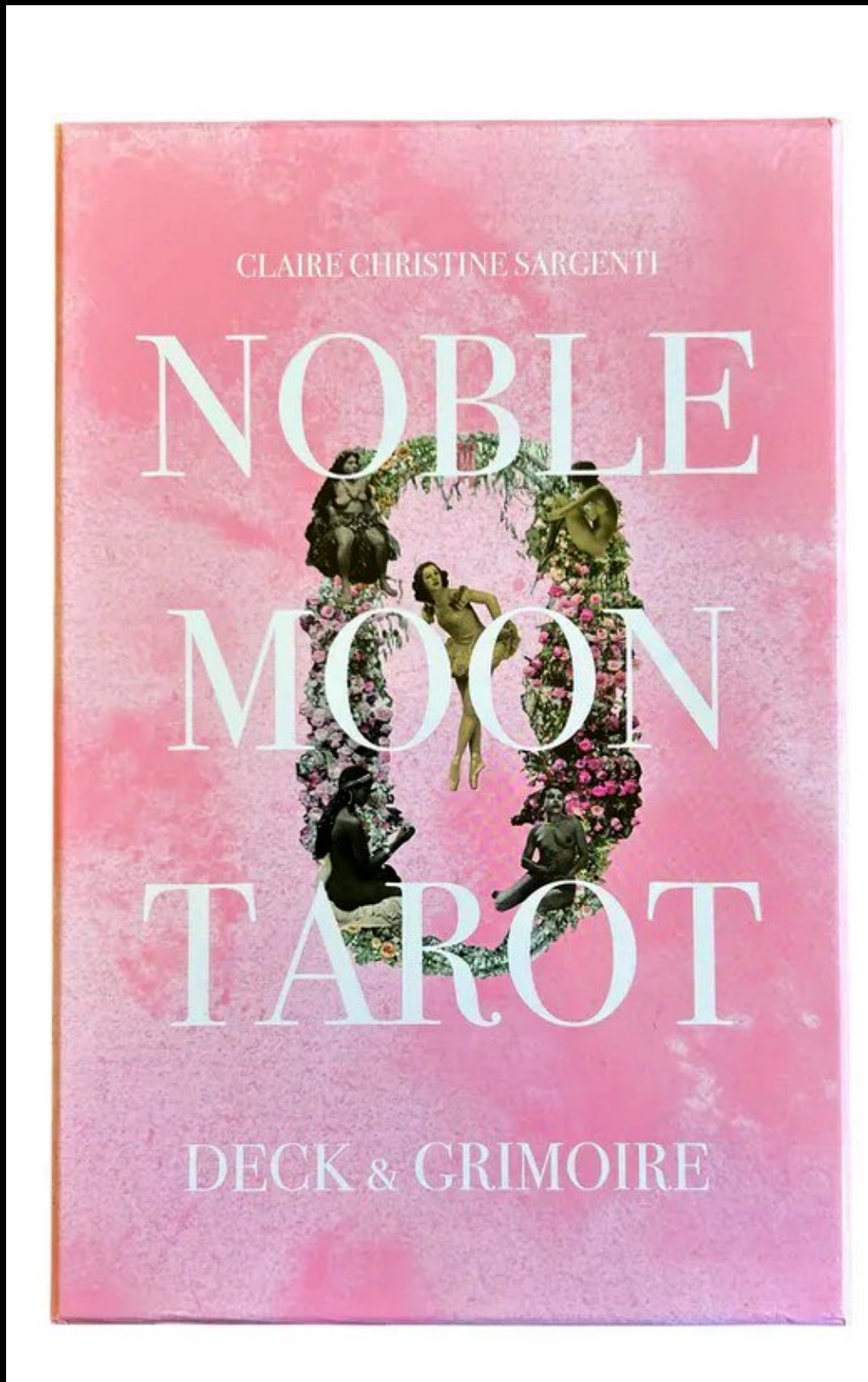
“Kansas isn’t real.” by Shawn Scott Smith  
X: @luckycreature  
Insta: @luckycreature  
Website: <https://luckycreature.neocities.org/>

“A Good Punt Falls Steeply” by David Chamberlain  
Insta: @david.b.chamberlain

“The Keeper of American Culture” by Claire Christine Sargenti  
Insta: @clairevoyantspirit  
Bluesky: @clairevoyantspirit  
Website: <https://clairechristinesargenti.com/>  
Book: Noble Moon Tarot

ISSUE203 edited, “gibraltar...” and ai art by airport

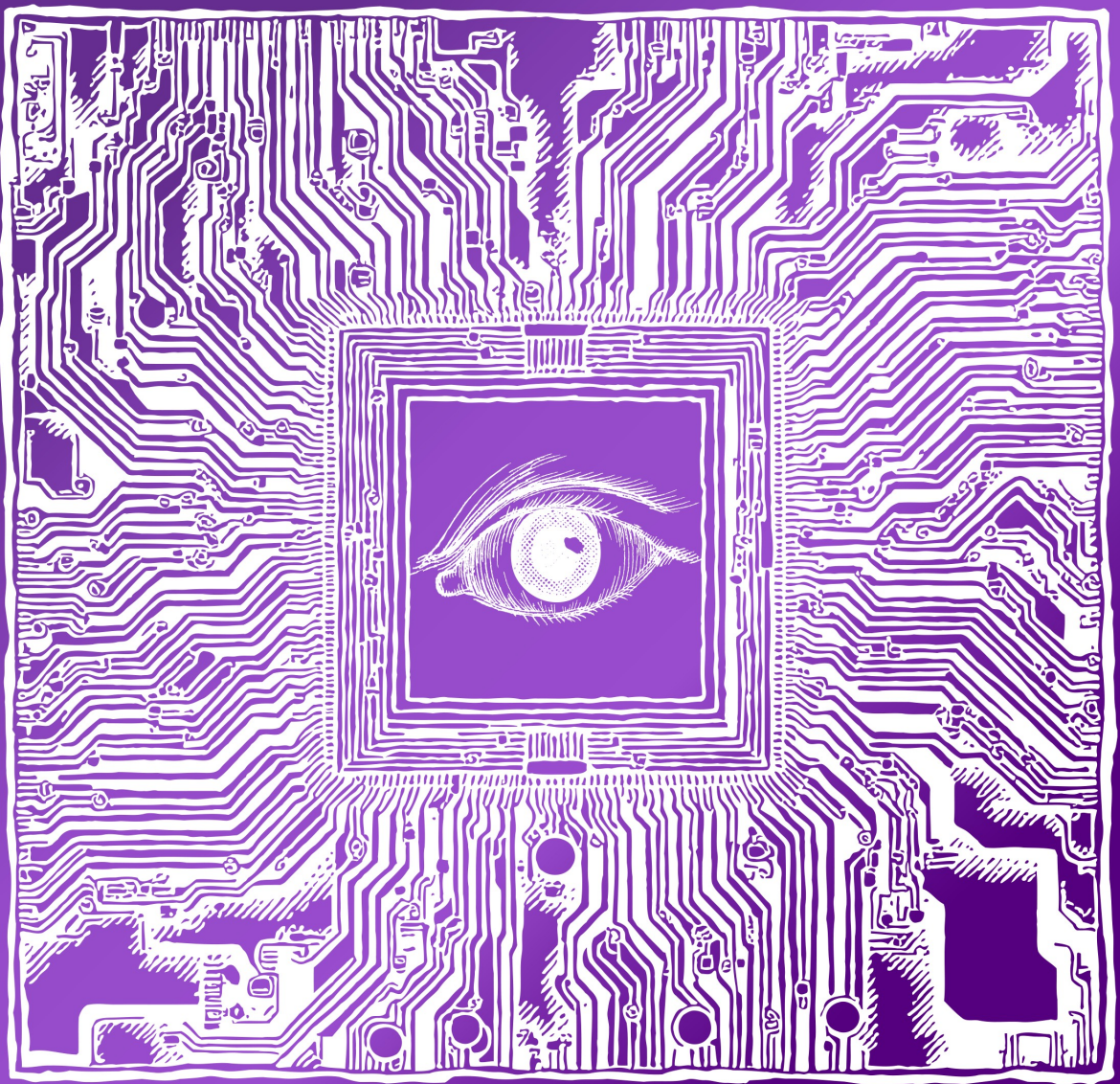
# ads



[click here](#)  
(electra gallery)

# ads

## VOIDGAZING



**MK ZARTEL**

[click here](#)  
(whittle micropress)

ads

雙  
城  
誌

you  
you

[click here](#)  
(insta—music)


# ads

Chill Subs

[Browse](#) [Features](#) [Community](#) [About](#) [For Editors](#) [SLUSHPILE](#) [Support us](#) [Log in](#) [Sign up](#)

## Get published. Promote your work. Grow as a creative.

(All without having a mental breakdown)



We list 4134 submission opportunities for writers, 1478 for artists, with 1188 contests and a community of 9080 creators who've tracked 31249 submissions. We've been around 443 days and there's plenty more on the way.

[Log in](#) [Sign up](#)

[See all statistics →](#)

---

We're building a submissions manager! [Learn more](#)

[click here](#)  
(website)