

miniMAG

issue205

sleek young evil





Zoomers

Nik Hoffmann

I am a madman,
Deranged, decoupled
From the noise,
I have come to kill
Those who are like me,
To end this line of madness,
To push the edge to suicide,
And in that suicide be useful,
Be redeemed by its death,
That suicide be undone,
That suicide be baptized,
In death be baptized,
And risen anew.
Out here in the desert,
In the wild, I have spoken,
Called out to the stars
In the abyss of night,
Called to the earth,
That it may swallow me,
Called unto the mountains,
Fall upon my head.
I call out to my diaspora,
My tribe, now lost in mania,
Strength now monstrous,
Beauty now hideous,
Horrid minds of immense thought,
Come to me my kin,
Let us peel off our flesh,
Scrape off the decay,
Purge the destruction
Which slides inside our skin.
Let us patch on wineskins,
Bandage with honeyed gauze
And plaster with the desert sand,
Made with lotus milk;
God have mercy.



First Communion

Ausiàs Tsel

I didn't hear the voice before my first communion. That night, after the party and the presents, after my Valencian grandmother's tears of happiness, after I'd placed the small leather rosary case on my night stand—the one with the silver clasp that caught the streetlight—when I was finally in bed, I heard it.

It wasn't a scary voice. Not aggressive. A soft voice. A calm one. The kind of voice that sounds like it's smiling.

"Well," it said, "now you're an adult. Now the decisions are yours."

I pulled the blanket to my chin. Waited.

"You know, we have an understanding—God and I, that is. I don't talk to kids. It would be cheating. I only speak to those who can make their own decisions. So here we are."

That was Sunday night. Monday, it came back. Tuesday. Wednesday. Each night after prayers, after I'd kissed the small golden crucifix Mum had given me, after I'd turned off the lamp, it started.

It told me about the incomparable joy of opening a body. How flesh separates along invisible seams if you press just right. The inexplicable warmth of blood soaking one's hands—not hot, not cold, but the exact temperature of the inside of your mouth. The precious calm that comes after. How a corpse isn't the person that was there minutes ago. Just an empty sack, still warm. Like a costume left on the floor.

By Friday, I couldn't remember what silence sounded like. Even in school, between the voice's visits, I heard the echo of it. The descriptions. The anatomical details. The promises.

Saturday night, I tried sleeping with my head under the pillow. It didn't help.

Sunday night, I pressed my hands against my ears until they ached. The voice came from inside.

Monday again. The Monday after that one. And the next. The voice was patient. Methodical. It described the weight of a human heart. How long it takes for eyes to cloud. How pretty they become, like a marble that turns opaque. The sound air makes leaving lungs for the last time—not a scream, not a sigh, just a whisper. If you listen closely, that whisper tells you all of creation's secrets.

I was so tired. My eyes burned. The taste in my mouth was like brass, like I'd been sucking on coins. The world had a gray film over it, and the voice was the only thing with color anymore.

I'd stopped eating. Food tasted like dust. Mum was worried. She kept touching my forehead, checking for fever. Her hand was warm. She smelled like the lavender soap she always used. Like safety. Like sleep. But would she smell the same inside?

"You need rest, darling," she said. "You look exhausted."

That night, the voice said: "It really is quite simple. One act. Then silence. I promise."

"Promise?"

"I always keep my word. That's how we're different—God and I. He makes promises. I keep them."

I thought about it. I really did. I made a list in my head. Reasons for. Reasons against. Like we'd learned in school. But the reasons-against list kept sliding away from me.

I found the kitchen scissors. Well, I looked for them, really. The big ones Mum used for cutting chicken. They were heavier than I expected. The handles were black plastic, worn smooth in the places where thumbs go.

I waited in my room. I thought about first communion again. The taste of the wafer. The weight of responsibility Father Martí had talked about. About choosing. About being old enough to know right from wrong.

When Mum came to tuck me in, I was already under the covers. She kissed my forehead. Turned to leave.

"Mum?"

"Yes, darling?"

"I'm really sorry for the inconvenience."

She turned back, confused. "What inconveni—"

The voice had been right about everything. How flesh separates. How blood is exactly mouth-temperature. How the sound is just *hhhh-hh*. Like a secret being told.

How the silence comes after.

I'm lying next to her now. The scissors are on the floor. My hands are dark with it, sticky, cooling. Her blood really is warm. The sheets are soaked. They smell like copper and lavender soap. Like coins left in the pocket of washed trousers.

The voice is gone.

The silence is here.

Now I'm going to sleep. Silence, at last. And Mum's warmth overflowing, soaking me. The voice was right. I love sleeping with her. Like when I was little.





A Fisher of Men

Arbogast

It's His blood, she says
as she holds the chalice
to my lips.

“If you want to live forever,
you've got to drink like me,
like I, vampyre.”

The first's first wife,
forever unwanted,
wants me to join the night's choir.

“It's the best blood—His blood.
With it, you'll never have to obey
or bow your head again.”

The temptation, electric.
My veins—a riot.
My heart, aflame.

But some semblance of sanctity
holds pause.
I look upon my satan:

“To walk the night,”
I say,
“With you?”

“I make no promises;
I insist for no leech,
but still drink

and dream of all the nightmares
in the forever after—
in the wine-red world born

of His blood.”



late for lunch

Stephen Ground

thru streaks of cold,
inescapable sun, half-

open eyes soak up
slashes of spectres

streaking stale air like
jet streams left over

from ghouls in a rush
to return to their crypt.



Giallo Night

Nik Hoffmann

Black leather hand tight round the knife,
Stalking, creeping in steps of light
Shuffle; Breaching the tar-black sky,
An hour of blood, seeking to die.

The shriek of a scream heard round the wood,
Cold rush of air, snap of a branch,
A beauty laid where death now stood,
Sole hand of evil turns nigh its grasp,
Weak lung expels a rattled rasp,
Spirits succumb to night at last.

After the screams fade down to coals,
The echo returns with waning glow
Like instinctual tread up treacherous paths,
The foot sees not but yet still knows.

bedfellows

Jerome Berglund

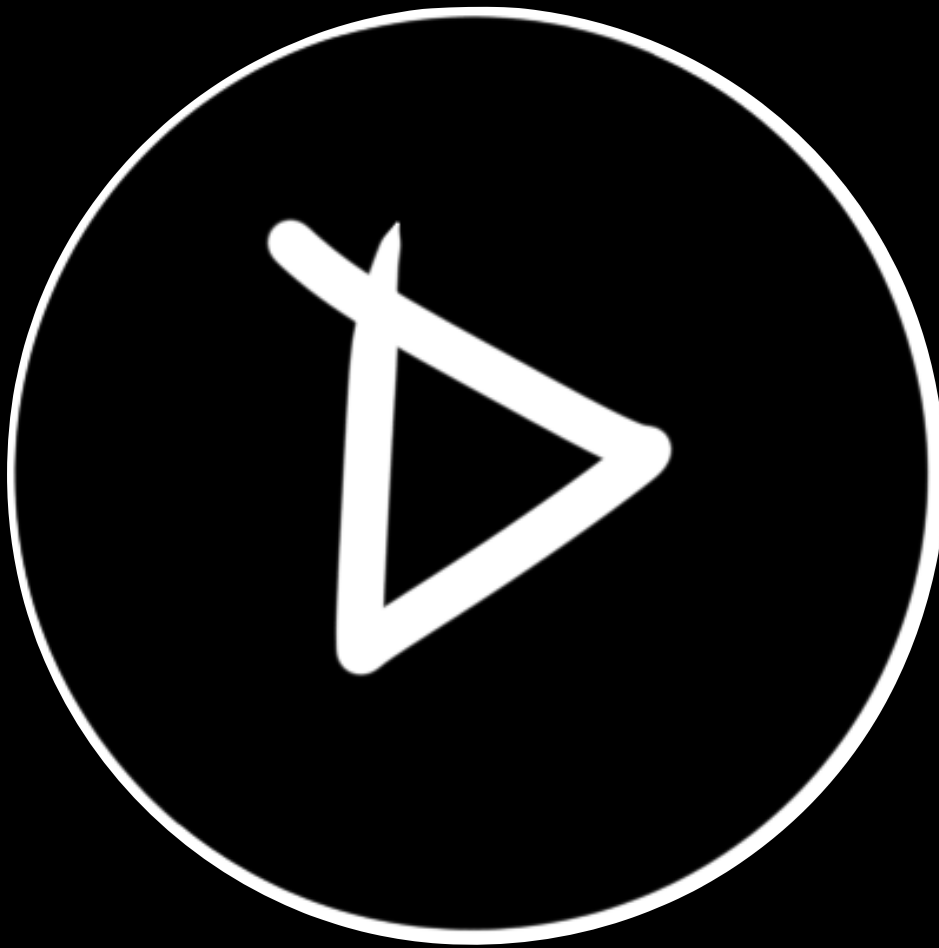
The photograph finagles with the peanut farmer's wife is conceit, but her autographing it amounts objectively to nothing short of inspired. You can see first lady is perfectly at ease, as he wears a pin displayed on his lapel with obvious perceptible pride—though inflected by a certain peculiar, barely contained amusement his companions read nothing immediately into.

appropriate
familiar, comfortable
iconography
baseball bonfire dwarves
lull of Americana

But that pass, familiar to each and more or less taken for granted at this point by all within the inner circles it pertains to, grants him enviable access and privileges, tantamount to vouchsafing his integrity and credibility. For how could he *not* be of immaculate character and faultless background, after all? His country's foremost security experts have vetted him most scrupulously. Those most well-informed and suspicious forces in the land convened at length, ultimately determined his reputation to be impeccable, his record untarnished by even the slightest hint at, suggestion of blemish or impropriety. His S shaped insignia, sparkling like a skeleton key, attests to their explicit approval and endorsement.

Always
happy to sign
souvenir...
To whom address?
Irrelevant, agreed!

* re "There's a small section of the museum dedicated to "prison art," and I found one piece particularly interesting. It was a Baseball Hall of Fame "logo" painting that was actually signed by more than 3 dozen Baseball Hall of Famers - including Yankees legends Joe DiMaggio, Mickey Mantle, and even President Nixon - but the painting's artist? None other than serial killer John Wayne Gacy... According to the museum placard, after the painting's completion, it was obtained by an independent art dealer named Stephen Koschal, who then obtained the signatures over time without telling the athletes who the artist was. So everyone who signed the painting did so blissfully unaware of the artist's "unsavory" background."



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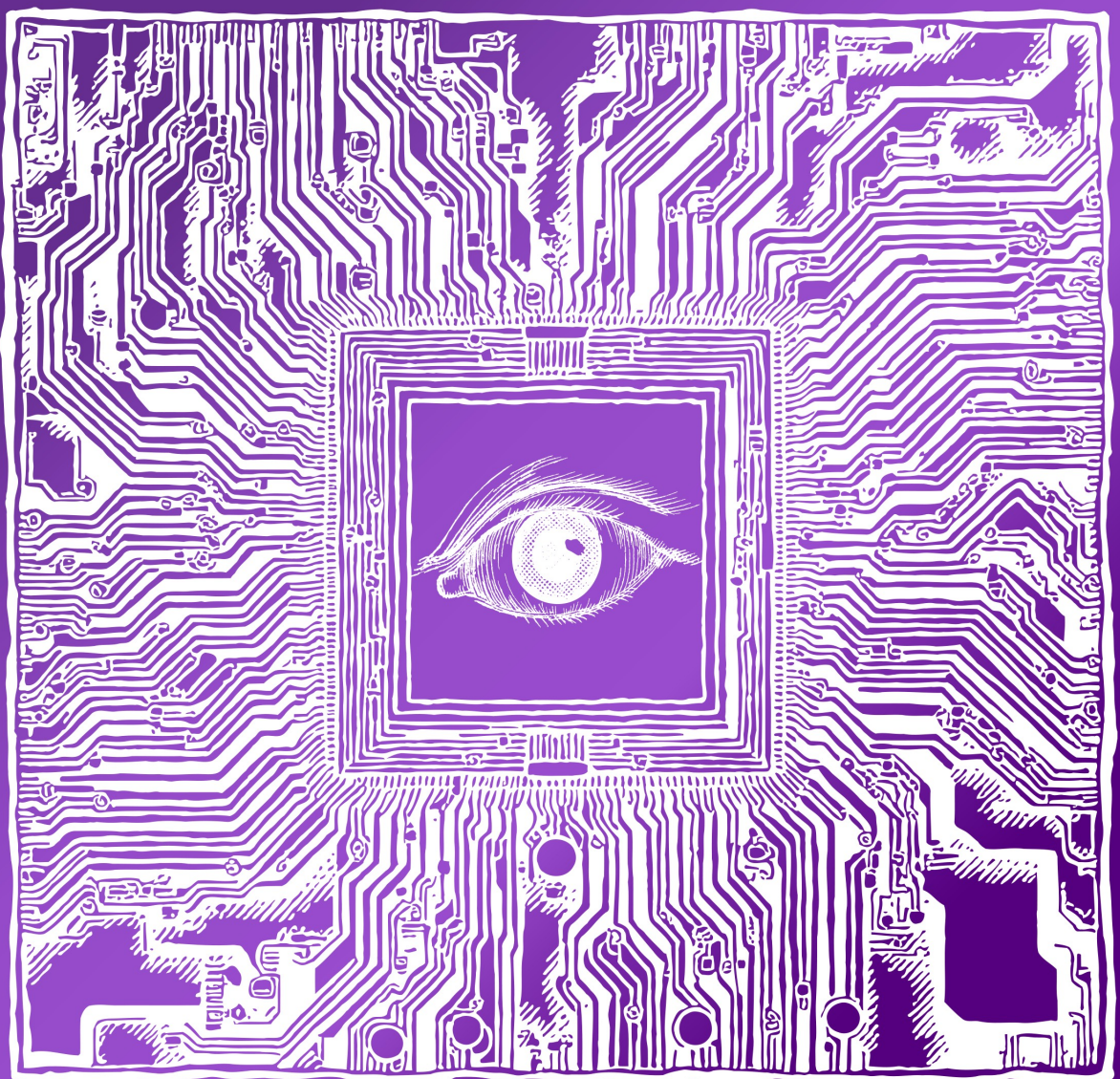
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