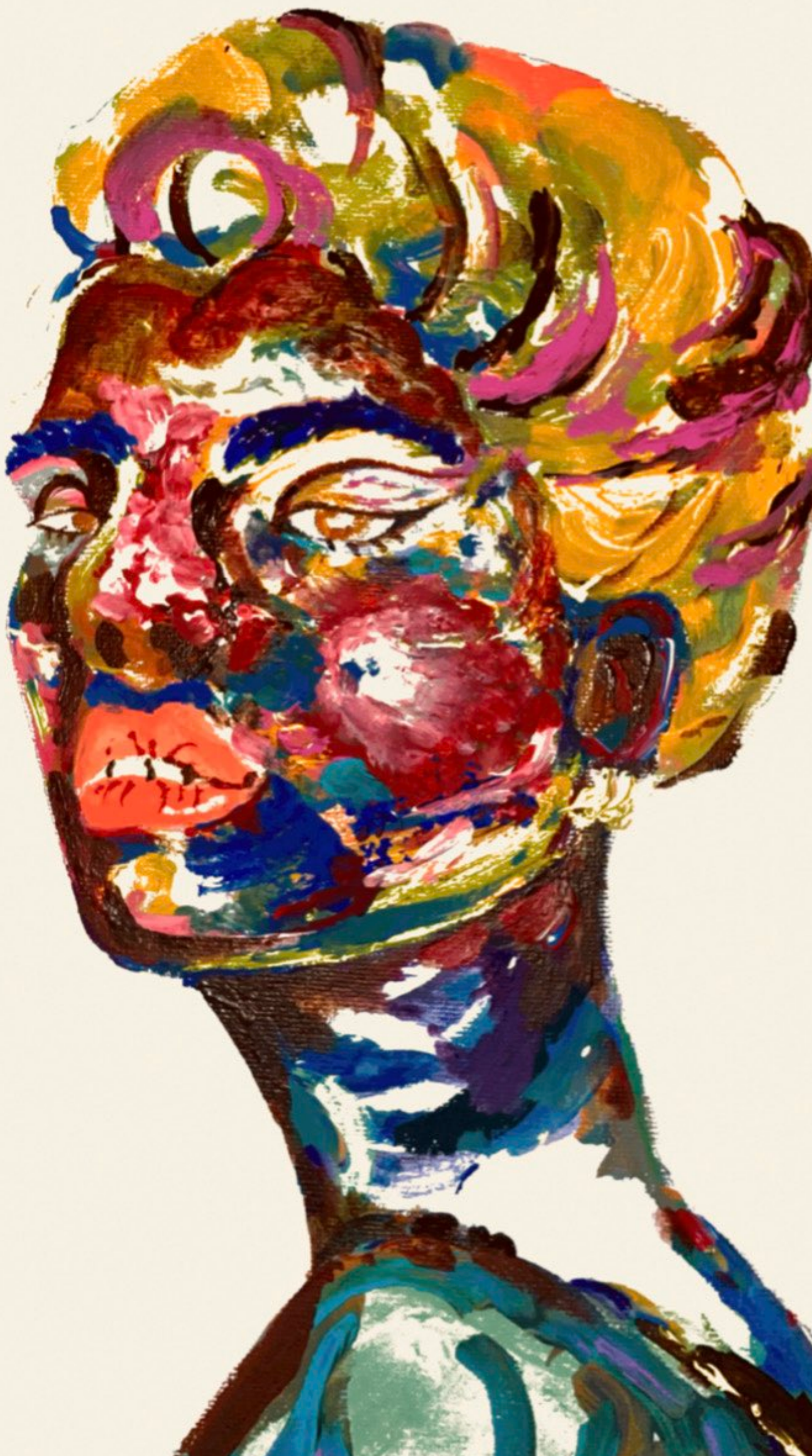


miniMAG

issue214
desire in; suffering out



atonement

Zoe Davis

you know I need it
straight
from the bottle

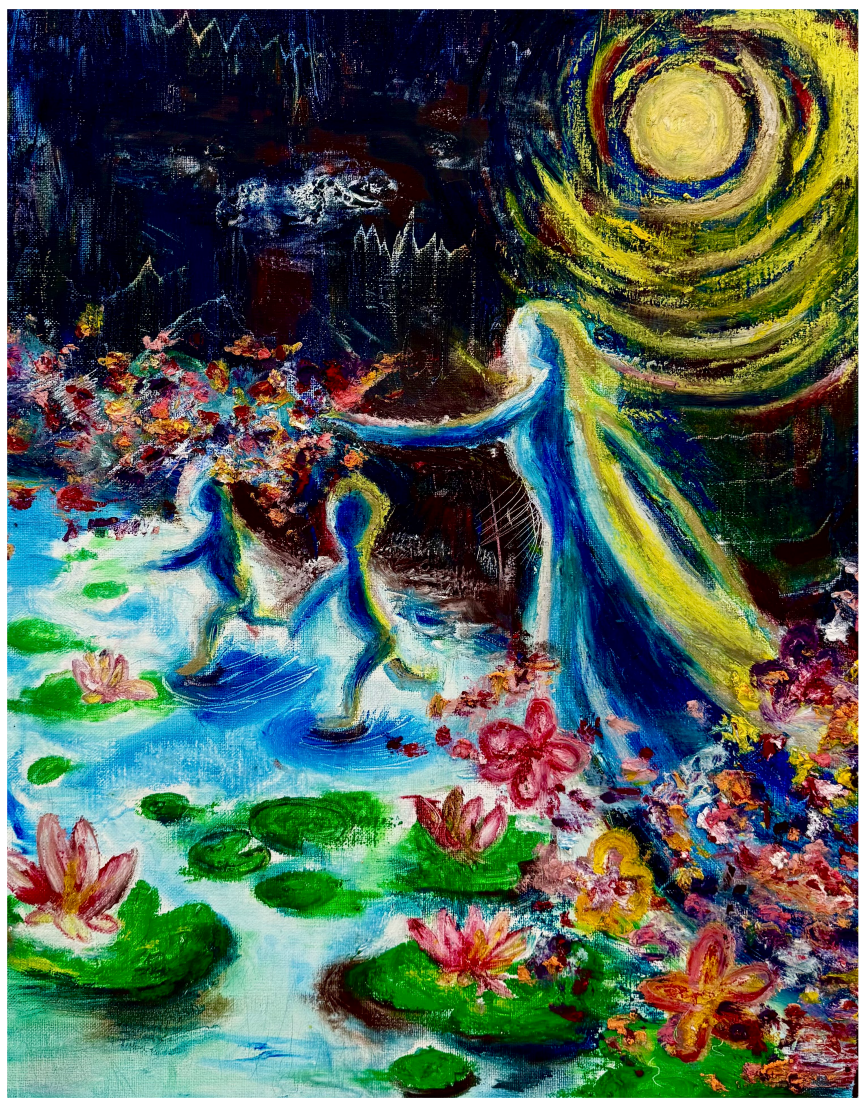
coiled inside
twin snakes
eyes milk white
dead
 / somehow
alive

inverted like a ritual

 make
 a sign
a cross my chest
cup ceremonial glass like
 baby's
 head
 cheers
 to
 butcher
 ed
 endings
 oblivion

alcohol renders snake venom harmless
burns the throat

tastes like bootleg absolution



Princess

Jean Liew

I saw her dance, seven veils flying
Golden anklets chanting a prophecy of death
Her dark eyes flashing, her smile enchanting
Through blood-red lips, I will have him
I want no strutting peacocks or guards
But I will have him

The little maiden clutches the curtains
Face as white as the ice on the cliffs
I am scared, she confesses, of the sea
And of the country when I arrive there
They say I will be queen, but I am scared
I wish to remain in my native land

Her back is turned. I see her henna-dyed curls
Falling upon the material of her dressing gown
Her mouth murmurs a prayer as she turns her ring
And scratches upon the glass of her window
The only break from the monotony of stone
Deep lines read, nothing proved can be

The Inevitable Pursuit

Ansley Haines

He watches his sister with thinly veiled interest.

It is a brother's job to observe—it is a brother's job to make sure his sister does not know he does.

He eyes her as she chases a boy through lavender fields, the florals filling his nose, and he sees the fabric of the boy's pants grazing her fingers as she reaches for him. He observes as she shadows the boy in the grocery store, pausing in the freezer aisle to examine Lean Cuisines and Hungry Man feasts. Her fingers turn blue, cold against the frosted glass.

He knows she has watched the boy from the moment he was born. Many years ago she monitored as the boy slid from his mother's womb, red cheeked and ivory skinned. He and his sister observed as the infant's mother held him close to her breast.

He knows, with her tender heart, that she has loved the boy from the moment of his becoming. He felt her longing to stroke the fire that kissed the boy's sparse hair. He grew impatient at the cries that the boy forced from tiny lungs, but he stayed for the glimmer in his sister's eye.

New life, she tells him, is her very favorite thing.

He knows she regrets her pursuit in the way she slows her running feet against hard ground, placing pebbles in her shoes, dragging branches across her path—he knows everything inside of her wants to give the boy longer days and quieter nights.

He thinks she is a hero in her own right.
It's a pity that others don't see that in her.

His sister, in a moment of her greatest tension, calls him a thief. As Time and Death quarrel she spits, “they always say you're a gift! And what of me? A monster!”



“How is that my fault? I cannot help what I am!”

“Neither can I,” she says, suddenly quiet.

She tells him she is jealous of accolades, the shoulder shrugs, the soothing comforts of acquaintances, “maybe it was just his time” spoken in his name.

Death tells him she has always resented her unfortunate reputation of guts and horror with no glory—no one ever speaks of her sensitivity, her reason, her compassion. No one mentions all of the ways she delays her chase, allowing those she seeks a few more moments on Earth's solid ground before catching their last breaths.

Hesitantly, Time reaches a hand to pat her shoulder. The lilac fabric shimmers under his palm.

She tells him she knows she should have caught up to the boy many years ago, should have caressed his soul within her own tender hands, nestled him close to her own chest, silenced those delicate, pink lungs—but she refused, allowing him to slip from her grasp.

“I’m trying to write a new name for myself,” she breathes. “I’m trying to show people that I, too, am kind.”

They watch the boy now, together, examining his failing body against narrow bedrails and plush blankets. They listen to the hushed conversations of “not much time now.”

Slowly, Time breathes the smell of the lavender essential oils diffused from the corner.

He is comforted by the scent, inhaling the peaceful aroma.

“Maybe,” he motions to the boy on the bed. “You are the kindest thing that can happen to him.”

When Time nudges Death forward, she sighs.

As she extends her left hand Death asks ever-so-quietly, “Would you like to join me?”

Time watches as the boy wraps thin fingers around his sister's hand.

“Who knew death would smell sweet?” Time says as Death smiles. The boy returns her smile, snaggletoothed and tired.

As a final gift to his sister, to the boy, and his family, he refrains from tapping his watch—instead, Time stands still.

Death glances at him, eyebrows raised.

The room smelled of lavender fields.



Lust for Eternity

Zoe Davis

as observed by calliphora vomitoria

You chiseled your face into the bathroom stall
blunt biro Michelangelo
as if it were Mount Rushmore
confident that those looking up
from the brevity of life's necessities
would gaze upon it and see
greatness. Instead, they observe a fly
rubbing its hands
contemplating villainy.

Innsbrook

airport

Someday
I'll be back
And get exactly
what I want
It'll be great

I close my ears
And smoke a joint
And walk somewhere nostalgic
I grew up here
around these office buildings
I know the office park like the back of my hand
The names of the businesses have all changed
They're a layer of black glass and a layer of heavy red brick, sometimes they repeat 2 or 3 times, they are very Richmond, very southern modest, tame, comfortable for the geese. The manmade ponds are green in a comfortable way, there's always a turtle, a skink, and a sunfish if you go fishing (I learned how to fish in these corporate-made ponds); they've stayed, the businesses have swapped hands, the signs; the names carry no explanation "Compulytix" what could a company like that do, what do they sell, how do the people feel, each day, walking into this insignificant little office, is it fair to call it insignificant, they could do anything



After

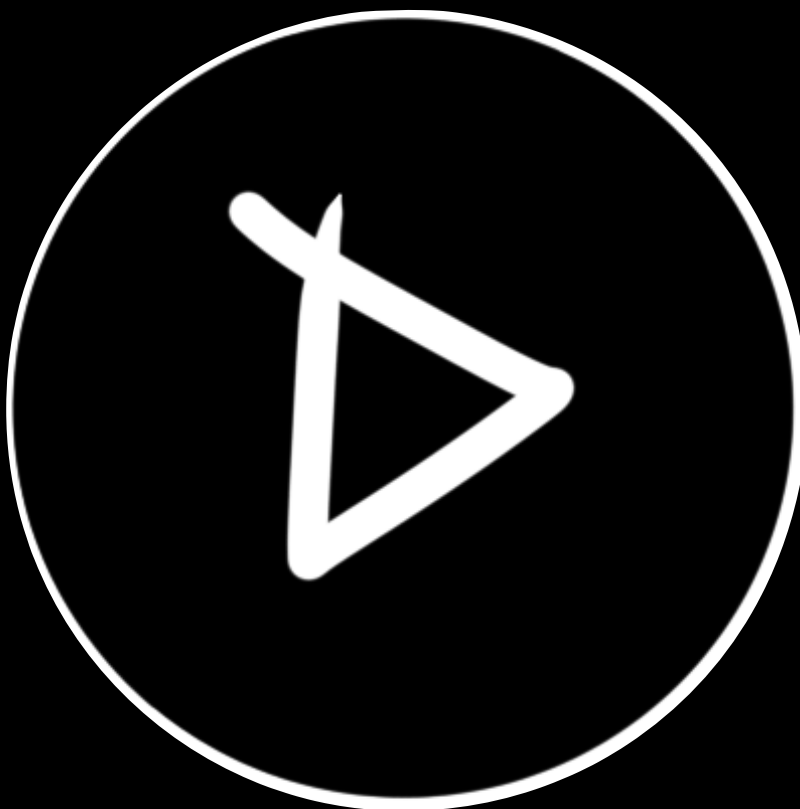
Craig Kirchner

After, you know, not during
or the moment, after -
the after spoon, I've come to
see as the best.

I used to want to get right up,
get a coffee, take out the dog,
but now I realize it's the most liberated,
tension free of moments.

The need to *do*, leaves the solar plexus,
dissipates down the arms and legs,
out through the fingers and toes.
It's an *Om* moment,

comparable to the mindlessness
that the most successful,
advanced meditation
strives to achieve.



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book: <https://a.co/d/8bTfxxI>

Art by Julie Ha
Pg 01: look
Pg03: mother
Pg05: side profile
Pg07: heart of the sea
Pg09: flowers

“Princess” 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.

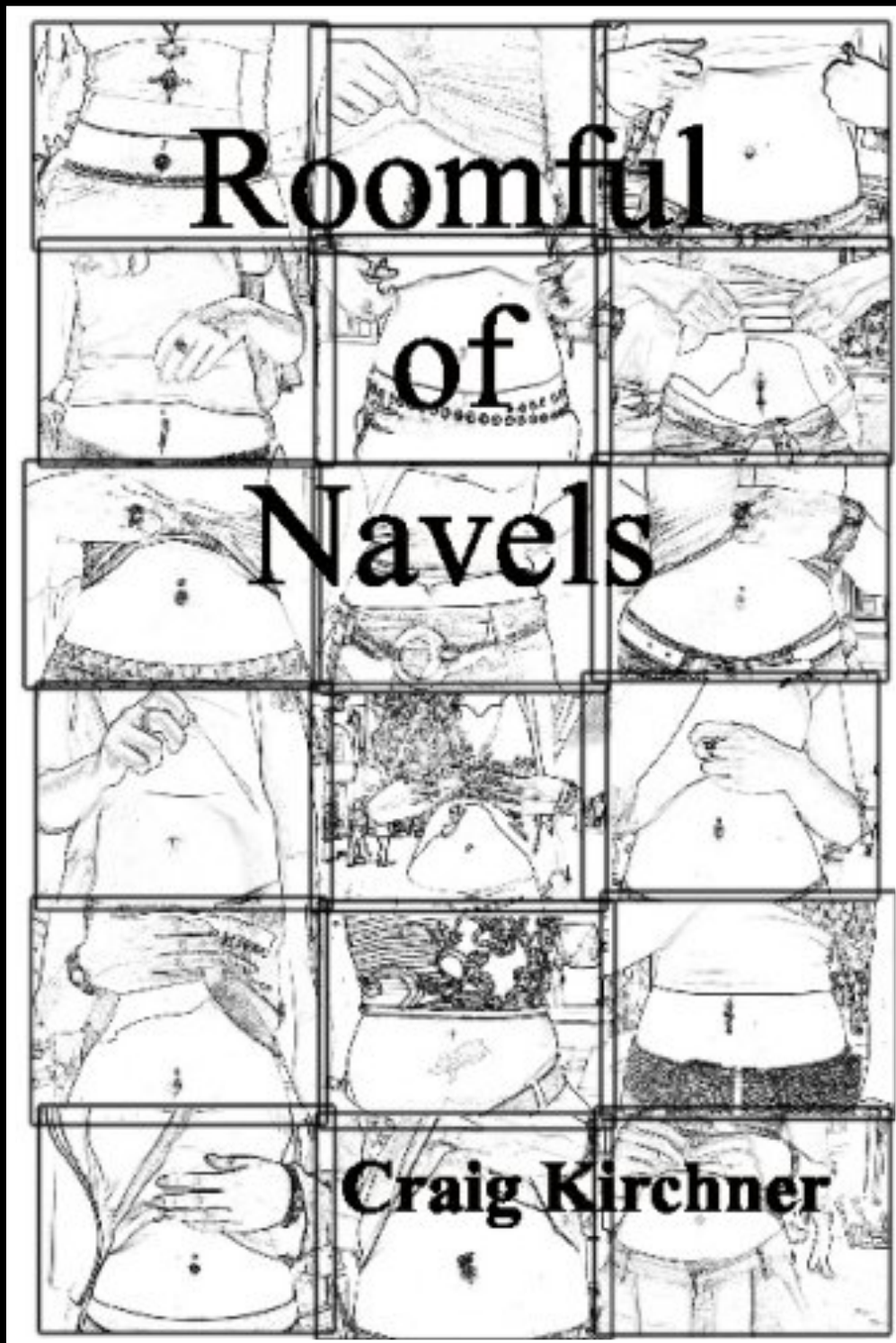
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