

miniMAG

issue181
various rabbit holes



Try Again Tomorrow

Caridad Cole

Your brain needs to be watered it's as dry as your
bones your bones are aching and you can't lift
a finger your hands are shaking you need a
massage there's something curled up in your
stomach reaching up to your lungs. your throat
itches as it climbs onto your tongue and
dribbles down your chin *hello there* *goodbye*
you feel much better





Bibliosmia

Kushal Poddar

In an old bookstore with a sneeze
I cross the threshold of forty.
Bibliosmia slips into the long list
of the allergens I should avoid,
albeit my fingers stay inside the book,
Steinbeck's. I hear the window,
open, of the faded unairconditioned shop
and begin to inhale inside and outside
at once, the way a child sniffs his mother's
breasts and shifts a little to breathe in
the fresh air. Autumn must be on the steps.
I try to remember what part of the year
I was born in, and I feel a success and failure
in suppressing the fact of my birth.
I sneeze again. The preloved book
releases a photo and before I can catch
a glimpse of it the rectangle of past
loses itself into the street below. Everything
is equal in oblivion. Everyone. I keep the old book in me.



Blonde

Emily K. Sipiora

On stoli in the desert
bored of what
happened to me

Testing the waters
there won't be a bridge



The Rabbit-Hole

Allison Guan

I did not stumble down
So much as I flailed,
Mud half-shallow on my
Ankles fringed by a
Dress I contemplated shedding.
Doily red cheeks still marred by a fall.
Thrilling, it was, to fly for a fleeting second—
To be a morning lark vying
For a perch? Arms pressed against
My sides I couldn't
Breathe but still
I pretended to be
A bard and then—
Then I could sing



Lime Half

Terry Trowbridge

I will cut a lime in halves
and enter one in
a turtle race

It will work
just long enough
for my accomplice
to empty the safe

Thirty-five steps backward
through the cheering crowd
to the door

Rendezvous at the
margarita bar
after midnight



The Annual Speech

Huina Zheng

At the year-end meeting, the general manager stood before the projection screen, PPT clicker in hand, reporting on the year's performance and next year's target.

Her gaze swept across the room, lips curved in a faint, almost merciful smile.

“Due to a series of bizarre policies from the U.S. government, the entire study-abroad industry has suffered a cliff-like decline.” She paused, letting the words hang over our heads. “Many companies have collapsed, vanished, absconded. But us? We’ve not only stood firm. We’ve grown. Others rely on tricks and fabrications. We rely on systems, on strength, on vision.”

Her smile vanished. Her voice dropped cold as she declared that the PPT slides were confidential. No photos, no leaks. Anyone caught would be fired on the spot. She clicked to the company's revenue figures, magnifying the consultants' performance chart.

“The industry has entered a new era. Ivy graduates? PhDs? They're everywhere.” Her eyes narrowed. “A Harvard diploma means nothing on its own. Clients sign with the company, not with you. Without the brand, the system, the platform, you are nothing. Out there, in this harsh environment, you would be reduced to cannon fodder.”

Her heels struck the floor with heavy rhythm as she moved forward.

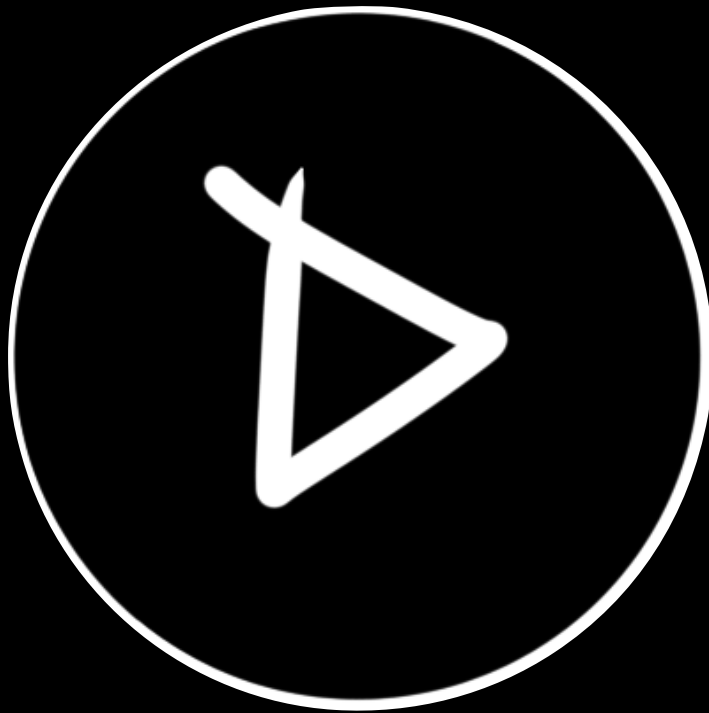
“But as long as you follow the company, you will rise with it. The capable, the loyal, the committed will share the dividends of victory. Only when the company triumphs, can you triumph.”



To Ask The Question

‘Shèun Ominira-Bluejack

"A bubbling brook, a flowing stream,
The Sun sends down a glistening gleam,
The wind blows in from the east,
The grass is long,
Your lover begins to sing her song,
You breathe in her hair,
Feel the warmth of her skin,
You'll need all of your willpower to prevent mortal sin,
She sings in a language whose words you do not know,
Yet you understand its power and you feel its flow,
She keeps to time with a branch that's striking an old tree,
If given a choice, there's nowhere in the world you'd rather be,
She sings of loss and of pain, besides,
She rubs herself suggestively against your side,
You put your arm around her and she continues to sing her song,
You're so taken with it that you begin to hum along,
The bubbling brook, a flowing stream,
The Sun sends down another gleam,
You feel content in all things,
Now to ask the question,
You reach into your pocket for the ring..."



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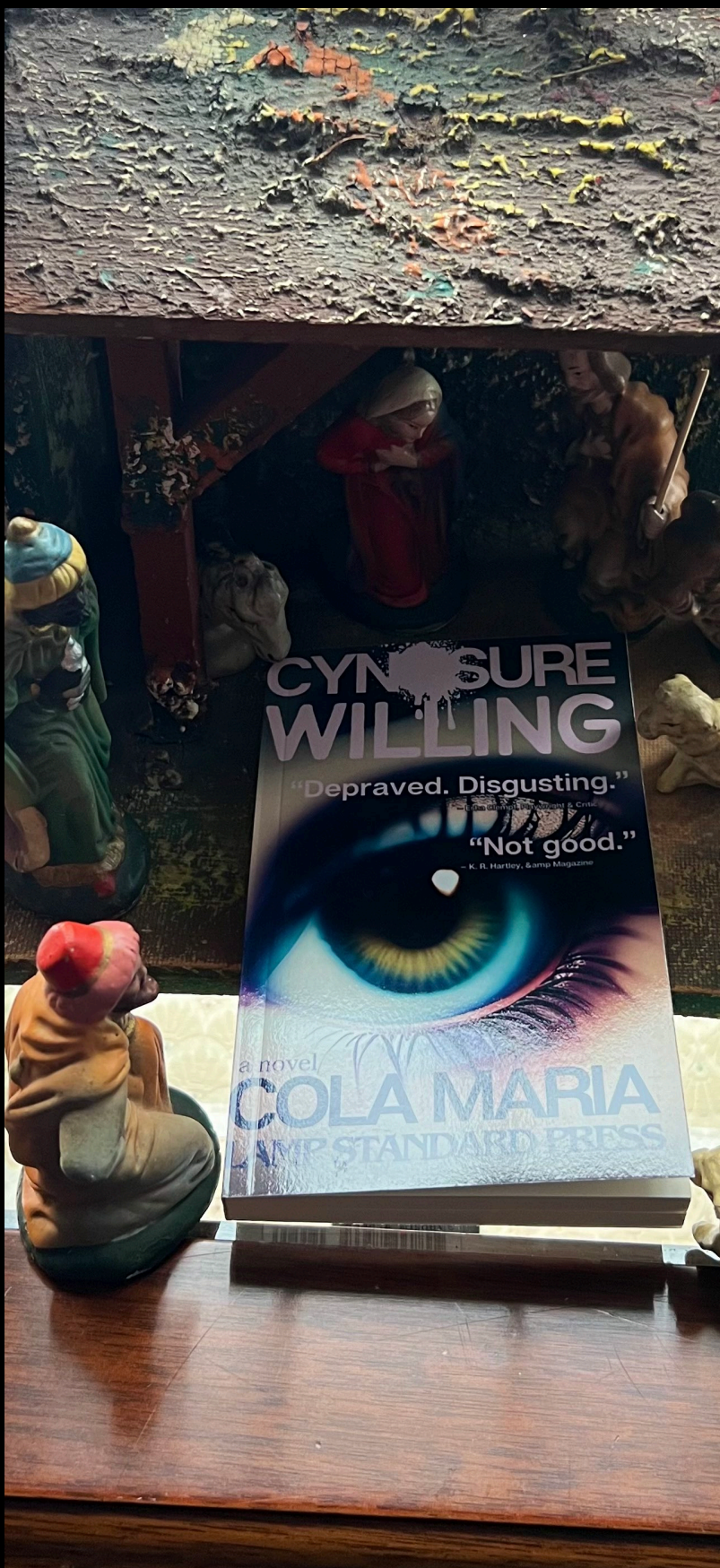
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