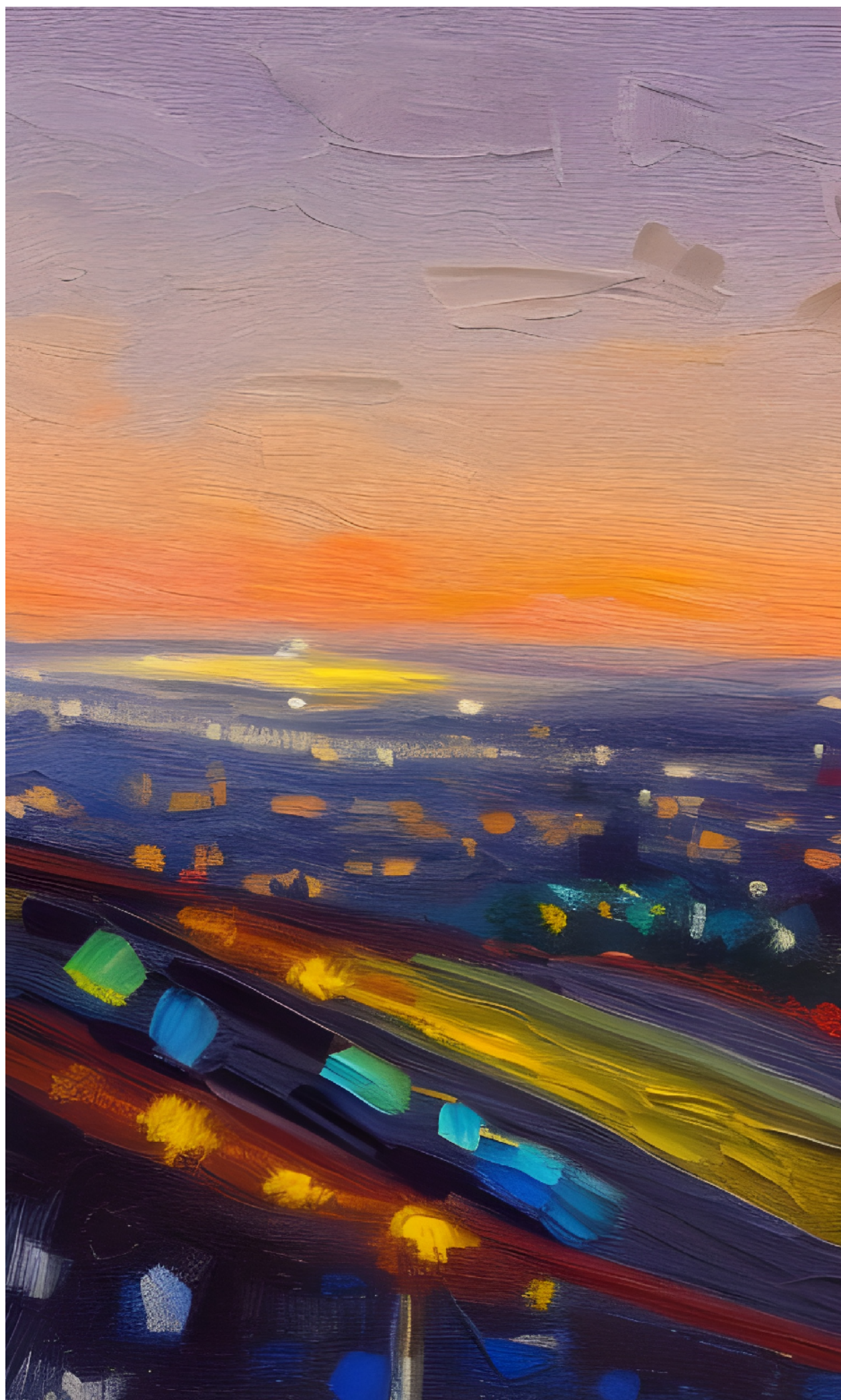


miniMAG

issue24
hushed



POEM FOR SEAN MOON 문형진
(after Revelation 19:15)

Hark Herald

Sean —

(i know you're reading this)

it could be
those angles of your arms. the contours of your hips
which i press against

Sean —

there is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth.

things got quiet last night. my mother
came down the stairs half dreaming, reached
above her head into the stars
and lifted the roof from our house, the sky from the earth

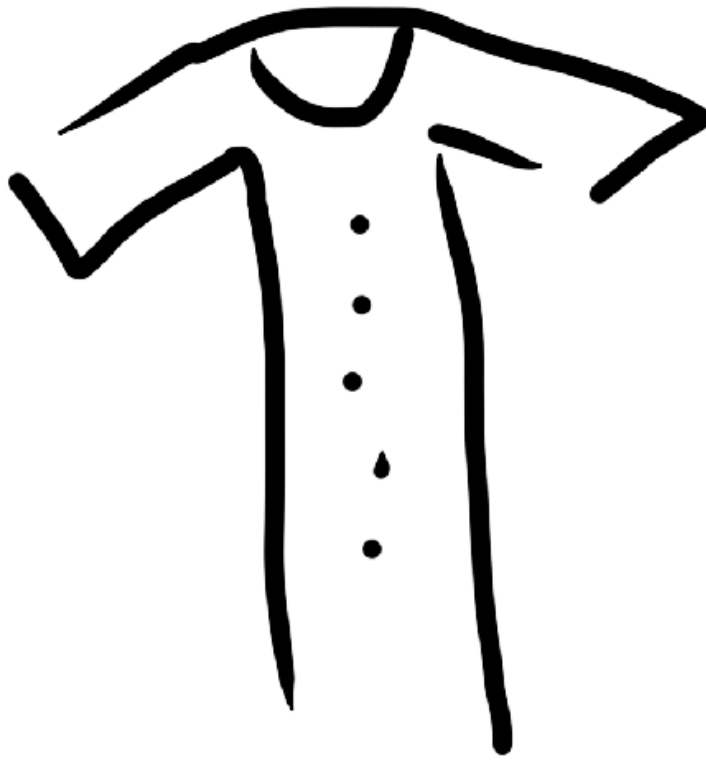
this brought the ministry in
and i saw you there gleaming

i rolled a .223 cartridge between my fingers.
the church was spilling out
under us, unfolding from the planes of our bodies.
i wished a weft of rosaries
ribboning palms together
for prayer. i think the crown
looks nice on you. i think
the dress looks nice on you

on the livestream, you looked into my eyes and told me
“bad men deserve only mass graves”
& i shuddered with how true that was

Sean. there'll always be someone
to touch your neck
to help birth the swords from your throat.

you might not like it but
i'm your mid wife to night.



Coat

Alex Prestia

You get a new coat, grey and workmanlike and fashionable. It's all you think about, stepping around town out of a cab into a bar to the alley to home just wondering about the zipper and carefully buttoning and unbuttoning the pockets.

Till one day you're on a curb waiting for the light to turn and the people to go go go and you haven't thought about the new coat all day. Just wearing it. Then the new coat isn't the new coat and you're going about from cab to the bar to the back alley to home thinking about a new jacket you'd like to buy.

One Exhausted Bitch

Emma Laurent

one exhausted Bitch

that's me!

absorbing Your laziness

and Your foul disrespect.

my weary head exposes only the crown of my conscious

suppressing my deep mass

while my apex is small

i will attempt retribution

for us then and us later than

the iceberg in Your arrogant wake

like everything i represent

everything i cherish

everything i am

it won't matter

for You will crash

You will char

over and

over and

over

You will kill thousands in the condescension of Your

disaster

and while You will drown in selfishness

time will consider You a martyr in pride

though it was i who set a boundary

i will be to blame

for the expectation of consideration

stupid me.

i'm one, exhausted Bitch.



Heliocortex

Thomas Bergvinson

Unknown textures cling to me, stray dogs prey on feral cats
A thousand miles across a nameless valley, we set off for the journey ahead
Within my fading memory of the previous day, a person I once knew comes to me
Their words melt into nothingness, we climb trees to avoid predators
Our eyes pierce through the jungle canopy, into the heat of the void
Someplace nearby lays the heliochamber, it waits for the dawn to arrive
A new day begins and three men walk through the valley below
"We'll reach the coastline by tomorrow" one says to the others, "and then we'll finally be free"
I recognize the plants that surround us, but they're made of plastic and hair
The heliochamber releases pheromones, and gears shift from within its veins
Cats develop higher intelligence and take control of the dogs
We rest until we're ready to go again, you and I in the tropical heat
The traveling salesman puts on his rattlesnake boots and drinks the last of his alkaline water
The bandits notice him coming, but it's too late for him to be saved
The dogs eat his remains under the supervision of their new cat masters
We take cover from a rainstorm under a papaya tree with an elephant
Memories fade into mere remembrance, nothing feels internalized anymore
We come to a door on a mountainside, it's been locked shut for two hundred years
The heliochamber begins to reverberate and someone scratches our scalps
The bandits reach the coastline, beasts moan with ecstatic delight
Few have crossed this valley before, and no one has entered inside
We noticed the stray dogs approaching and retreat into hills made of glass
Inside the fading memory of a decapitated salesman, I discover the code to the door
We enter inside and lay down, motionless, without expectations
The heliochamber's servants summon us, we proceed to a sandstone room
You and I sneak down the hallway, and witness the light of the orb
We approach it and it speaks to us in a language without any words
The chamber's servants notice us and seal us inside
I open the door to the inner chamber, and together we step into light
The heliocortex pulsates the forbidden pattern, and everything is remembered again
We wake up together alone in a field, with new bodies and memories
This goes on infinitely, in every life I share with you

REVIEW

Bros

Alex Prestia

Give extra attention to
the part when he's taking a walk,
why'd the rest have to be a rom-com.
Why draw transgressive outlines
then neatly paint by the numbers.
There's chaos, energy, feeling,
real feeling, as he walks through
the city on another lonely day,
then the long march of
gay heteronormativity takes over.
Any other direction,
give us any other direction
some point to tuning in
instead of just expanding
the fences of the cage
to include a few different animals.
The goal wasn't
to make different
normal

All Three

R M Gurnhill

My final memory of love is hardly orthodox. You could call it unusual. I would like to call it forgettable. Let me explain.

I left school at sixteen, as most do. Achieving six *Passes* and a half-decent report cemented my normality, and so I moved up to college, where I studied (sometimes) 'accountancy skills'. After two interminable years and several mediocre results, I left, unnoticed, to train 'in the field'. I soon managed to claw my way to an average position in an average firm in my average little town. Next came courtship, to a junior partner, which brought with it the end to the insecurities of the one-night stand, and the *lonely-geek-boy* dilemma. Next came marriage, though her lack of interest in children began to grate after a few years of gradually diminishing returns. It was only later, when I realised that she was investing elsewhere with regular incoming deposits, that my position became solitary.

I guess I wasn't really cut out for 'stress-management' and burying my head in the occupational sand of infidelity. Eventually the firm realised that my (*my*) position was untenable and afforded a solution to it. Next thing I knew, I was carpeted by The Partners, who failed to retain my services, although I regained my freedom.

For Jane, the cookie crumbled; or rather, her side dish found a new accompaniment and dressing, and as a sugar-mummy Jane merely dissolved. This still left her with everything from the marriage, and me with naught but a decree *absolute*, and enough money problems to keep the tax man busy for a lifetime.

By Christmas of that year, I found myself washing dishes in a local hotel, just to pay the rent on a one bed, unfurnished and undecorated



flat, downtown.

That's when I saw her. Five-foot-ten-inches of pure Venus. A shaft of light through the darkness I called life. I was smitten. She was beauty personified. But how beauty could bite, I was soon to discover.

Of course, she failed to even see me at first, having eyes only for the array of dishes set before her by the chefs, bustling in just long enough to collect them before disappearing through that swinging portal, and back to the public that awaited her service. I vowed that this would change. She would be mine. Oh yes, she would be mine.

The first time she approached my area, she glided effortlessly in, a Roman goddess, arms laden with scraps. Her first look at me and she smiled; the heavens opened, and cherubim sang. For me, the little Buttons of the kitchen. The first words I heard from her lips were song and trilled like the birds to Snow White. Claire was the beauty's name. It took several weeks before she warmed to me, and by then I was putty in the palm of her hand. Oh, how I wish I hadn't been so malleable.

Despite her growing interest in me, she somehow seemed reluctant to meet, and broke our first rendezvous. That should have been the first warning. But love is blind. I was left shocked and devastated - surely some major catastrophe had befallen her. The following evening, as we talked amidst the clatter of catering that surrounded us, she explained all.

She had been trapped (trapped!) in the house, babysitting her little sister because her mum had returned late from work. Damn the selfish parent! Perhaps tomorrow? A lifeline! I grabbed it with both hands and began to plot the winning of her heart. I was bitten and smitten. It would be some time before I found out just how poisonous that bite was.

Plotting the capture of her heart was all-consuming, but my cunning plan worked. Within a fortnight she was ensconced in my bed and in my life. Though never did she stay, always dashing home to ensure that her, apparently unable-to-cope, single mother, was fine. The subject seemed complex and incredibly delicate, so I never dared intrude or question her about her family. Oh, but the times we had!

We saw Titanic, curled up in bed before the DVD, munching popcorn and holding each other tight. Afterwards, I walked her home in the moonlight, imagining the silhouettes of eaves as mighty bergs of ice,

bearing down to crush our love, which survived and thrived. We saw Romeo and Juliet, and imagined ourselves as the star-crossed lovers, unable to live in this cruel world without each other. Watching *The Ring*, I spent most of the movie shielding my cowering goddess, who sat terrified at the horror and suspense. We laughed all the way home.

Yet still I left her at the corner, to watch her walk the last short distance alone, waiting for her beautiful figure to disappear for another night, before returning home, equally alone. If love is indeed blind, Stevie Wonder is its minstrel, and that boy plays a mean tune. How mean, I was soon to discover.

Bowling and pool followed; she beat me easily at first, yet I started to suspect foul play when we played squash, a sport new to me - she lost pathetically. Such fun: such days! And so, months passed.

Before long we would lie awake and describe to each other with ever more embellishment the wedding to come, the foreign honeymoon on a romantic, secluded isle; children, the cottage in the country, and the rest of Utopia. For sixteen weeks I lived in heaven. And then came the Hell of realisation.

It was whilst walking home one sunny afternoon, head in the clouds, that the picture came into focus, the pieces slotting together even as my life fell to the floor and shattered.

She never saw me that day, so intent was she on chatting with them as she boarded the bus.

It was two weeks before she stopped ringing and calling round; the hotel never contacted me once to see where I had disappeared to. No wonder she wanted to keep us secret from the rest of the staff.

The following week I received a letter - just the one. I read it sometimes, in the small dark hours of the deep night, all alone.

I see her face in the bottom of every bottle, and every time I turn on the radio, I seem to hear our song. Those Nineties heart-throbs Savage Garden. Oh, but could Eden have been so brutal?

‘Truly, Madly, Deeply,’ they called it. I guess I was all three.



When You Were Three

Mona Mehas

When you were three, I had no money
No money for presents under the tree
The tree someone gave me.

When you were three, I was between jobs
Jobs at minimum wage and barely
Barely paid the rent.

When you were three, I faced the truth
The truth about Santa; I told you
You cried but soon forgot.

When you were three, I had a friend
A friend with a family and toys
Toys enough to share.

When you were three, you opened presents
Presents wrapped by another child
A child with a heart of gold.

i -also- just wanted to be friends

Alex Prestia

an invitation flutters down
from the rooftop bar
of a three star hotel

almost missing outstretched
hands that have ate
the same breakfast all year

You're hard-boiled
im overeasay, you joke

thats always the way it is until
one of us gets a finger
on that falling piece of paper

its easier to say im in love
when you won't look at me
every other time is a circus act

You're the lion tamer,
im a misbehaved tomcat, you joke

it doesnt change that id rather be free
until you wont look at me
id rather you wont look at me than be free

disconcerting but not a problem until
fluttering down on the wind,
tickets snatched for a new game

You're just playing
im playing too, you joke



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“POEM FOR SEAN MOON 문형진 (after Revelation 19:15)”

by Hark Herald

Website: <https://forms.gle/ja5DS67986R51z8N8>

“One Exhausted Bitch” by Emma Laurent

Twitter: @enlaurent

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Website: emmal Laurent.com

“Heliocortex” by Thomas Bergvinson

Insta: @tbergvinson

“All Three” by R M Gurnhill

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“When You Were Three” by Mona Mehas

Twitter: @Patienc77732097

linktr.ee/monaiv

edited, “Bros”, “Coat”, “i -also- just wanted to be friends”, that
line image of a jacket or something, and ai images (made at
NightCafe Studio) by
Alex Prestia