

# miniMAG

*issue42*  
confessionals



## Quondam Cheater

Donna Dallas

I melt like chocolate  
in your hand  
when I am on the stand—I don't  
deserve to get caught  
yet I always do  
it's the carrying of guilt and shame  
that ages me  
panic attacks when the phone rings,  
I don't come home  
have no excuse  
you hurl me into the courtroom  
I swear on the holy Bible  
plead not guilty  
not guilty!

You know it as well  
as you know the crevices and  
lines of my body  
I'm a lousy liar  
that iron curtain falls upon my breast  
I make promise upon promise  
to stop  
you let me stay until the next time

Yet I prefer to break promises  
and stay  
bedded with guilt

# A STATE OF SIN

R.A. Hinkle

*“[The poet] loves God above everything, God is for him the only comfort in his secret torment, and yet he loves the torment, he will not let it go.”*

*-Anti-Climacus, The Sickness Unto Death*

What does it mean to love another? And what does it mean to accept their love? I don't know me, so how can she know me either—how is it love? She rolls slightly on her back, sinking deeper into my shoulder as I stare at my ceiling and wonder what it means to be a self, a self capable of love for another and for itself. She turns some more until she faces me as I pretend to just wake up.

“Good morning, my *love*.” She kisses my cheek.

“Good morning.”

She rolls back over, grabs her phone, and scrolls for half an hour as I stare at the ceiling and wonder what it means to be a self, a self capable of love for another and for itself.

“Make me coffee?” She asks.

I sit up and walk to the kitchen, turning the stove on to boil the kettle. Then I slide back under the sheets and press my side against her rear as she adds to the pressure. She reaches for her water and sips three strong sips through the straw and continues scrolling.

As I hear the water in the kettle stirring and squealing, I'm thinking about what it means to love. How can a self in despair at not being itself even think of beginning to love?

I shift to get back up, but she drops her phone and rolls over,

wrapping me in her arms as she says in that suppressed, high-pitched, endearing voice, “I love you, baby.”

“I love you, too.”

With a peck on her lips, I slide back to the kitchen. I cut the heat on the stove with a loud click of the dial and measure out the beans. I’m quite particular about this. One missed measurement and it will taste bitter like the coffee down the street. Then I pour. Circles of hot water flooding the grounds as the aroma fills the air.

She’s still on her phone when I bring her the hot mug. She doesn’t seem to notice as I set the steaming cup on the side table.

I take a long shower and think, *what does it mean to be a self, a self capable of love for another and for itself?*

The bathroom door opens, and I’m startled as she slides in beside me and holds me from behind.

“Thinking a lot today?”

I nod.

“Thought so.”

She soaps up and rinses and cuts the shower before I’m done. Then she wraps up in her towel before handing me mine. I dry off and watch as she paces around the bedroom, wondering what outfit she’ll lobby for the day. I grab a pair of jeans and a plain black tee.

She kisses my cheek and leaves, only to call me two minutes later to say it’s raining and can I drive her to work.

Back from dropping her off, I take a seat at my desk and try to write, but all I can think is *what does it mean to love another and what does it mean to be a self, a self capable of love...*

I’m jealous of her. She can love and receive love, but my love only goes one way. I’m scared I do not love her. This isn’t a confession. I want to love her and find it easy to act lovingly toward her. If I love anyone, it’s her. But I do not know what it means to be a self, and if I don’t know how to be a self, then how can I love—

How does she do it? So natural and full of grace. She has no despair. She just is. And receives my love without worrying for a second that it’s not real. But what good is her love toward me if I don’t know how to receive it? She receives my love because she is a subject, but if I am not a self, I am neither subject nor object. Only a disparagement in between.

It seems repetitive and reductive, but only because it is an unbreachable problem; a problem I cannot solve.

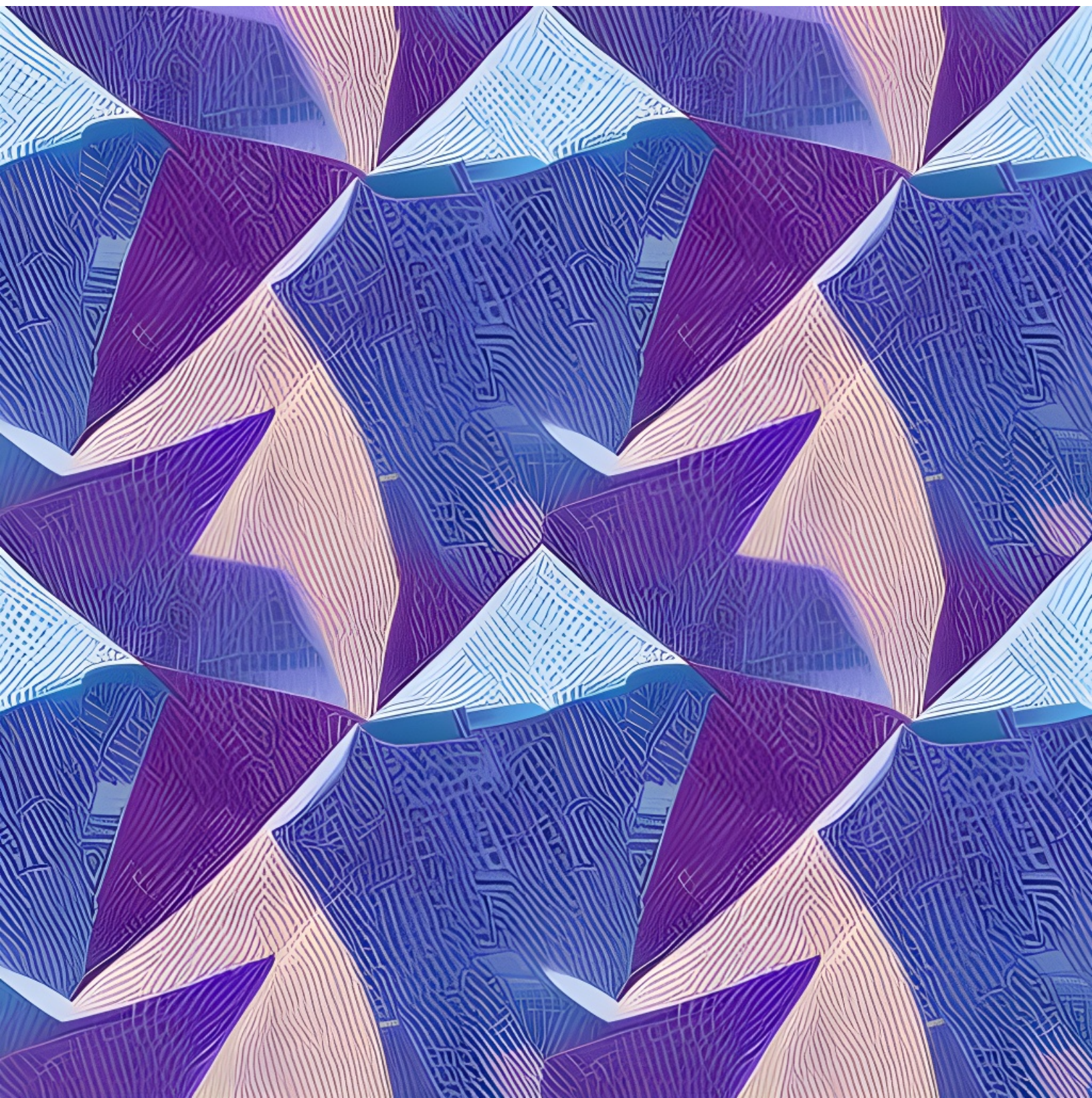
The rain moves past. She walks home for lunch. I make two sandwiches on sourdough and pair them on plates with kettle-cooked chips, and we sit on the balcony to eat. The fall sun takes its time breaking through and warming the earth. She says let's getaway for the weekend, and I say, of course, where would she like to go?

"The mountains... or the beach! Or Chicago. Yeah, Chicago would be lovely this time of year. I'll book the flights tonight."

She's giddy as she scrolls through her feed. I grin and turn to the trees for the answer to my problem.

"Oh! I'm late," she announces, adding, "I love you, darling." She kisses my forehead and hands me her plate, then walks back to work.

I place the dishes in the dishwasher and return to my desk.



## J Church

Christian Garduno

Your Stalin-like smile burned me into resignation  
to what ever the Fates may bring  
the night went deep and bright  
you were making absolutely no sense  
and I was hanging on your every breath  
I almost told you that night  
well, just know-  
if I *ever ever* told anyone  
it would have been you

You're in my black and white movie  
that I see when the sun shines through my eyelids  
drinking old Bluebird wine  
why on Earth do you still have a landline?  
I swear, this broken down shanty of yours  
is like a year full of somedays  
and the rain can't wash off the years  
you always said you'd take me to Tangiers  
in the morning, I drowned in your tea cup

Aw, come on, call in tomorrow  
you know I can't see you go  
how about I call in for you?  
I'll make sure to tell 'em you just can't today  
hand over that second bottle of Bluebird wine  
let's clear out the cobwebs in the crawlspace of our mind  
be a darling and hand me the landline  
come closer, come here  
tell me more about Tangiers



## Condemned

DaNesha McNeely

There was no choice but to rejoice in the resilience of my existence  
I am the product of stereotype come to life  
When the bottom is the starting point there is no direction but up  
Striving for the heavens with a road map of my own making  
What's out there for the taking?

Wisps of opportunity, a lottery where my name was not entered  
Privilege and legacy, history that's been vetted, storylines soaked in ancestry  
Opulence beyond the tangible, a past with links and not bramble  
Another layer of "other"  
It's not like I desired to be smothered  
To have my future micromanaged and dictated  
Playing a role that was vacant to placate the makers, providers and sires  
The absence was not deafening  
It was blank  
Empty  
A nothingness glossed over in my memories

Normal was relative and relatives were few  
And still no one knew  
We were estranged in the same room  
My jokes lifted a bit of the gloom...that's how I found out I was fucking funny!  
Observational humour mixed with wit, bit by bit by bit

Our blackness was not performative

My weirdness was pejorative, standing out, a stark contrast to what the moon and stars deemed "how it is/how it's supposed to be"

The holy ghost speaks through me to say "Fuck BET"

Expectations, standards led to lamentation

When you live below the poverty line you'll never find your way to 106<sup>th</sup> & Park

When you prefer to read alone you'll never learn how to crip walk

When your interests don't align

When there is no alter

When there is a tree of only the people I see

When you realize you've been condemned

Twas but a babe, the reality was barely of my making

My thirst was for the taking

Alas, I remain parched

Back arched

On the defense, teeth clenched

An invisible wrench tightening around my nerves until only pills can unravel the pile of anxiety I had become

My hereditary gift was mental illness

I've inherited struggles that are reflected in my mother's eyes

Weight that I've seen crush her spirit

She is a shell

Her coating of maternal love cracks with each stint in jail my brother finds himself in

And thus, I am golden, placed upon a seat of honor for simply being bold enough to be me

First gen college grad, first to travel to another country, first to come out as queer

These milestones are my own to cherish and relish albeit not so shiny in the greater scope

I've attempted to cut the story short

I've tried

I'm alive

It's the condemnation that has died



A woman turned the corner  
of the busy intersection  
She had a DSLR weighing down her neck  
Similar to the one you dissuaded me to buy  
She was also pushing a stroller  
Her outfit like mine  
The shins exposed  
Socks above the boots  
In January  
Wearing all black  
The sun was setting  
Glittering against the buildings  
The guy, holding the baby  
I was on the phone with you  
And forgot to take a photo  
With the phone we bought  
Together

Marcelle



# BENEVOLENCE

Daniel Frear

Sat next to each other on one edge of a large round table Herman and Tom are in differing phases of slump.

Herman has both elbows down, his forearms facing the sea of flat space in front of him, with his hands held either side of his large head, like an offering to someone of great stature.

"We need something that will highlight his benevolence" he offers.

"Hmm, highlight it or make him seem benevolent?" responds Tom, his posture somewhere closer to melted onto the table top, palms down, his head laid flat atop them, on its side to face his co-conspirator.

From this vantage point Hermans lips are pulled thin and into an almost smile by his pillar-like arms, propping up his ailing head. "Do you have to argue?" he says, part whistling through his distorted mouth.

"Argue? do I have to argue whether the man is in fact good, or do I have to argue your posing of the question? I don't think you can highlight something that isn't there, correct?"

"So, you do want to argue" Herman states exhaustedly, as he wriggles his thick hands further down his face, attempting to offer renewed support.

"If we're working on the supposition that everyone, that is every. single. person. has at least some good in them, then wouldn't that make 'highlighting his benevolence' a reasonable request, even if there's much highlighting to be done?" Herman rolls his eyes to the left, head unmoving, not even wanting to catch Tom's eye, but just let him know that he's made his point.

"You're too literal Herman. Always too literal, Herman" Tom, letting out a half sigh, strokes his head back and forth on the back of his hands, using his knuckles to scratch the itch and then comfortable once again, as he looks up at his brother in arms.

"You and I can suppose until the cows come home, forever, and we can confer and toss ideas up every which way and maybe even come to a conclusion, but it will never be completely accurate. no-one is ever correct and so the discussed benevolence of this man is a non-starting race, my friend." a small smile passes from the seeing Tom to the unseeing Herman, whilst Herman blinks at the words and breathes them in.

"You only ever want to argue, tell me I'm wrong."

"If being myself is arguing then you're right Herman, I can't deny myself and for that fact, you can't deny me. You could choose to leave and you could choose not to listen to me ever again, but I'd still be arguing somewhere."

Herman dips his head now, allowing it to roll between his dry palms, the sound of slight stubble on grainy skin rustling as he does. His left hand drops and he turns his head - weight transferring to the right - to look fully at Tom for the first time during their negotiations, not able to see it, but duly noting the smile that had been left behind.

"So, what do you think that we should do, oh great arguer and what do you think of him that is so damned as to hold no hope of any benevolence."

Tom blinks for a long time, and Herman wonders whether he's going to fall asleep, something that he wouldn't put past his comrade.

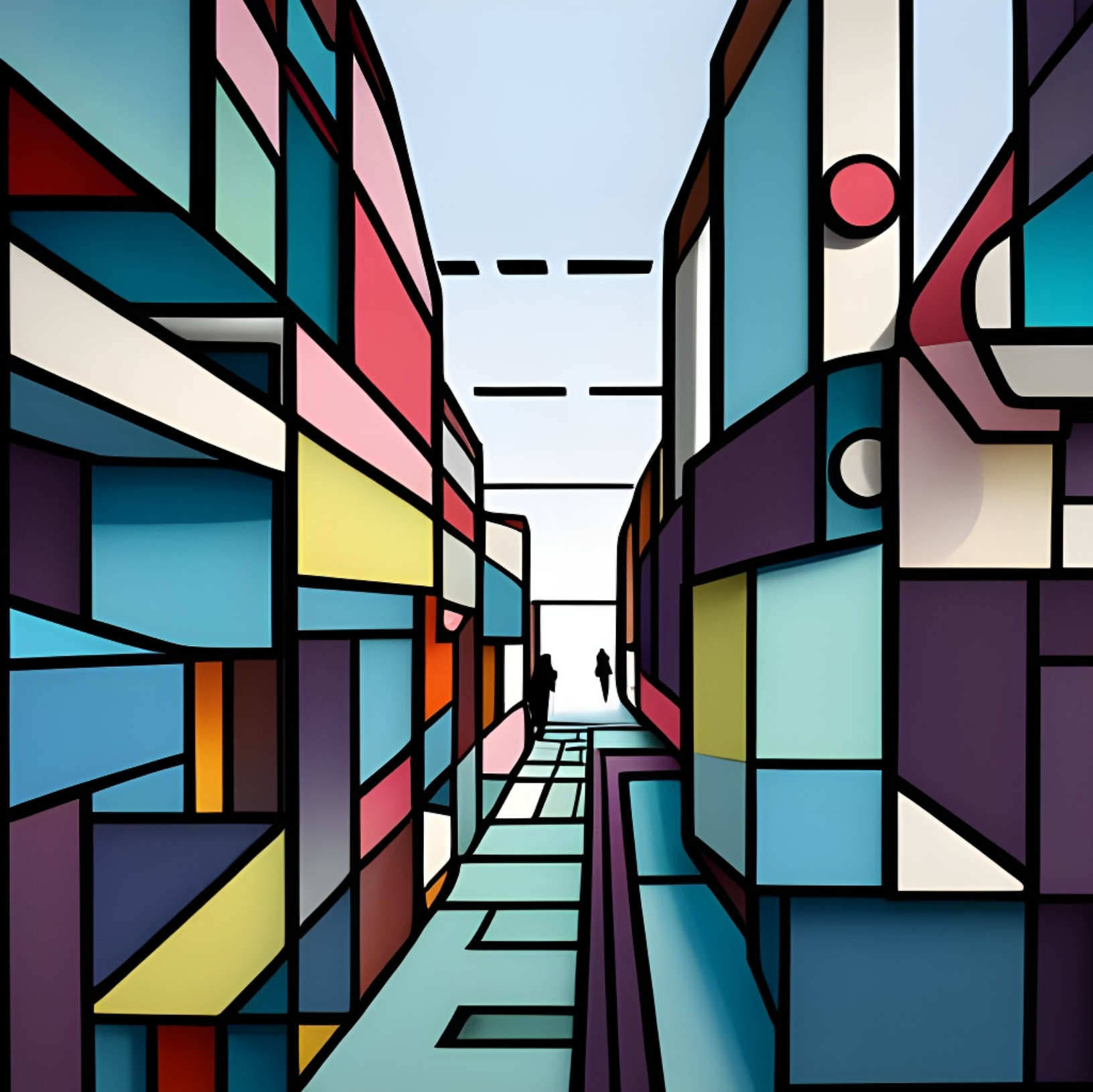
"Herman" he says as he opens his rested eyes "I think that we should do

what is right, as he'd want us to and as you yourself would die to do. We should do what is right and just and unequivocally proper and true" he closes them again, but just for a second this time.

"As you ask what I think, I'll tell you what *I think*, for I know nothing, the same as you and the same as him - I think that all of the world can see every man and woman for what they are, if only they look from a distance. the damage occurs up close. when we peer into the eyes of the person we're judging we can't see anything but ourselves and their eyes, and this is useless. I think that we've only ever seen him from our closed view and if you could see him as I see you now, or as you can see me, then we'd be able to paint the picture."

A long silence follows something like this as both men think, one about what he's said and the other, what he's heard.

However the silence isn't silent completely, they breathe in and out of time, they shuffle out of time, and everything passes by with a slight whir.



## Who's Waldo?

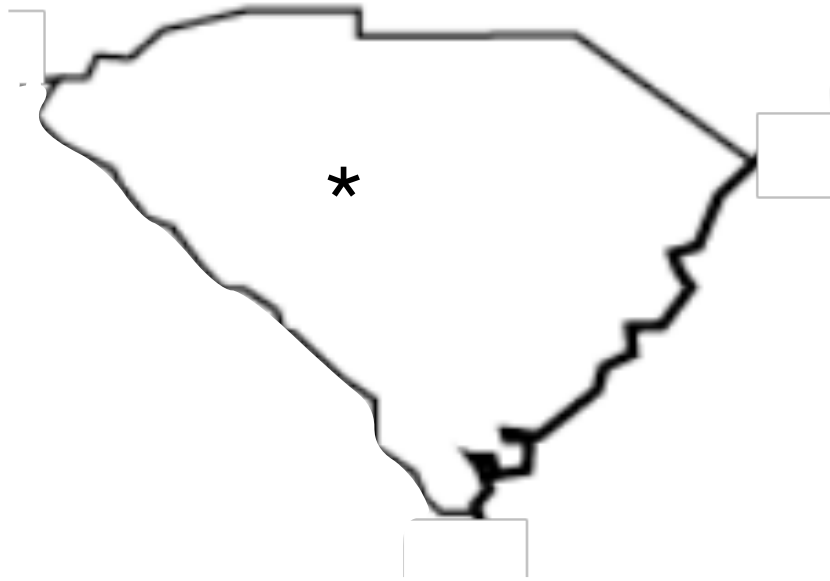
Howie Good

Everywhere I look I see dark streets, dark alleys, dark, narrow staircases. “Build therefore your own world,” Waldo said, “a refuge for stray thoughts, somewhere it’s never the same thing over and over, lynchings and riots and sadistic Mafioso.” I press myself into walls I find throughout the city. Ratchet girls wearing too much makeup and clothes that befit the occasion dance around the room. My tank of adult comet goldfish remind me when it’s bedtime by angrily splashing. It’s important that the kitchen is near and not to travel on bad weather days.

## Trust Friend

Simo Gagai

I love you my friend  
I miss all the games we played together  
Our favorite game, hide and seek  
You'd hide and I'd seek for you  
That's how we normally played  
My dear trust friend  
You are my day one  
A friend that was always there  
I don't remember a time I didn't have you in my life  
Yet I remember the times when you went missing in my life  
Like the time we were playing in my room  
My uncle walked in and locked the door  
I didn't worry about nothing because I had you my friend  
But only minutes after that you were missing  
Those times live in vivid memories  
I didn't want to lose you  
The pain was so deep  
I've kept looking for you since  
Can only find your remnants in certain individuals  
The world without you is a lonely one  
I was just a little girl  
You shouldn't have left  
Cyclones in my head  
Sharp thorns in my heart  
Blurry teary eyes  
Couldn't cry, couldn't make a sound  
Nothing made sense  
Couldn't use all my senses  
Now I only rely on that one sense  
Some call it the sixth sense  
I call it my new friend  
Because people took away my best friend  
So long my good friend  
Hope you find new friends  
Because you are a good friend to have  
And the void you leave behind is the one I wish I didn't have  
So long my good friend  
This world is null without you  
You were the best  
But now you're not here



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subs:         minimagsubmissions@gmail.com  
twitter:      @minimag\_lit

“Quondam Cheater” by Donna Dallas  
Twitter: @DonnaDallas15  
Chapbook: Smoke & Mirrors (amazon)  
Novel: Death Sisters (amazon)

“Who’s Waldo?” by Howie Good  
Poetry Book:  
Swimming in Oblivion: New and Selected Poems (amazon)  
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“A State of Sin” by R.A. Hinkle  
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“Condemned” by DaNesha McNeely

“A woman turned the corner...” by Marcelle  
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“Benevolence” by Daniel Frears  
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