

# miniMAG

*issue 76*  
*poems about poems*



## “cold reality for poets”

Tohm Bakelas

feeling low we drink—  
someday poetry will no longer work—  
we failed



## Coroner's Girl

Kushal Poddar

"Won't you ask how I did it?"

The coroner knows the most of it.  
He smokes. The night smells like  
warm beer and sleeping pills.

His colleagues leave for the pub,  
and he calls his girl, wants her  
to forbid him and urge, "Come  
home early.", wants her to say  
"Don't head for another obliteration."

She asks, "Don't you desire to know  
why I did it? "

It is someone else's job.

# Adrift Amongst Avenues

Riley Jordan

-I keep going to open the wrong doors.

Each looks identical to the next; Old wooden rectangles that have been painted a thick white paint tens of times over the last century. The cold doorknob nestles itself in my palm when I grab it. In my right hand I hold a gold key with the numbers 302 carved out in the copper metal. I don't have to fight it to fit in the keyhole. The door squeaks when I open it and gently slams when it shuts behind me.

I stand in the doorway facing my new domain. The room is small but bright. The desk, adjoined in that same signature thick, white paint sits parallel to the undressed twin sized bed. The window, resting only about 7 of my own steps away, takes up the narrow wall directly across from me. I approach the opposite side and yank the blinds up. On cue, the sunlight forces itself in through the glass and drowns me in the room. Its presence is warm and familiar. If I close my eyes for a moment, I can imagine that I am sitting with my twelve-year-old self on a beach in April when the air is warm but not warm enough to

cancel out the chilly gusts of wind that roll over my bare legs. I soak up the warmth as though I am a strip of black pavement in the summer. Glancing down at the street below, I see a few of the unfocused faces of my new neighbors.

I decide to leave the blinds open for now. “Treating oneself to sunlight is just as important as treating a plant to sunlight,” I remind myself in my therapist’s words. I laugh at the memory. I’ve never felt my own fragility more than I did while being compared to a plant. They’re lovely to look at, and I’ll admit bright green leaves do have a way of freshening up a room, but I can’t recall a time I’ve ever kept one alive long enough to watch it grow. That’s not to say I haven’t considered bringing home a tiny flower in a pot. I have. Just one summer ago I stood in the greenhouse of my small-town hardware store and toyed with the idea of becoming a caretaker to a plant in need. I studied the tulip buds on the shelf in front of me. Laying amongst its more ovular counterparts, I spotted the bud I wished to take home. In its oddly spherical shape, the bud laid neon green against a dark soil. I reconsidered the idea for a moment. Now the noise of mothers with young kids and working men on their lunch breaks was boiling around me and I was fearing that the plant had no potential in the supervision of my own green thumb and that somehow it would be unethical and irresponsible to purchase this tulip bud. I stepped back, then forward, and in a haste, I grabbed it from the shelf anyway.

For the first few days I cared for the plant diligently; nurturing it with tunes of love and a regular watering schedule. Then, inevitably, the week rolled around. The minimal bedroom floor space was suffocating in my materialism. The blinds stayed shut through the short duration of daylight. The tulip’s watering schedule became so insignificant that I would watch its soil dry lighter and grainier each day. I’d considered running the plant under the sink in my room, but the effort seemed so senseless when I thought about how long it’d been since I had a glass of water. Should I learn to take care of myself before I’ve learned to take care of a plant? Or is it vice versa?

I lay flat on my little bed. Even in my twenty-year-old body, my size compliments the twin bed perfectly. Car horns signal a change in thought to my brain like I’m a TV controlled by a remote. Even with the window shut, I can hear the aggravated sounds of drivers from three floors below me. There is so much existence here that sometimes it

doesn't feel like there could be such a thing as life outside of New York City. Like if I left the confines of this place everything around me would be barren. I haven't heard complete silence since I moved here in mid-August. The silence and the quiet are very different. When it's quiet, I can't help anticipating the next crash or bang that will rip my



tranquility from my hands. Silence, however, is a comforting promise that there is not a single noise threat within my hearing range. As the season silently changed from Summer to Fall, my tolerance to noise did too. I only notice the clangor from below when its impolitely pointed out by a relative on the phone. "How do you live like that?" They'd ask me. "I can hear the traffic, and I'm not even there," They rub that fact

in like it should elicit envy from me. It's difficult to explain during a phone conversation how sound has become my closest companion.

I sit back up on my bed. What is it that fascinates people about buildings? I consider this for a moment as I gaze out of the glass. I was fifteen when I saw a cityscape for the first time. Each building stood tall and illuminative like they were modeling some sense of welcomeness for me. Like they were attempting to prove to me that outside of suburbia is a world waiting to be set on fire. Without conscious thought, I made a promise to the lights in the skyscrapers.

Downstairs I push the lobby doors open to a flood of cold air and noise.

I haven't always been committed to the city. I can recall a time in my life where I hoped one day I'd live at the beach. I'd move back south after a long battle with the part of myself that feels attached to New York. Then after settling down, I'd let my hair grow out dark blonde. No more bleach. And I would throw on whatever clothes lay on my bedroom floor before going out each day. Maybe I'd even wear sandals. And I would walk myself down by the water and sit in the sand and not be bothered by the sharp sensation of uneven grains becoming embedded in the crevices in my skin.

I grew up visiting the ocean. My grandpa lived there and thrived there for years. When we would come to visit him, my sister and I would swim and run and breathe in the salty air. Then I'd dry off my body, grimed in a layer of salt and sand, and sit down in an unstable beach chair while attempting to ignore the frustration growing in my chest as I became more aware of how tangled my hair felt. I'd close my eyes, take a deep breath, and pray we could go home soon. When my grandpa died, we tossed his ashes into the ocean. I wondered if I could never force myself to love the beach, then could I ever really understand my grandfather's influence in my childhood?

By the time my evening class ends, the sun has already begun to sink down behind the buildings. The blocks I walk between campus and my apartment are perfect for admiring life around me. Living in the middle of Manhattan offers a taste of what it would be like to be in a room with every person on earth. Pushing past faces on the street is like second nature to me now, though I will admit it took me months to get out of the habit of smiling at those passing by. Where I come from, I'm used

to forcing myself to radiate a weak and flickering fluorescent light on life around me. In New York City, I can save the light for myself.

This past August, my parents moved us from North Carolina to South Carolina; accordingly tearing out the roots that took 17 years to grow into the soil of my hometown. They bought a white house with a stacked porch and a mini picket fence to match. It's located in what was once a plantation where enslaved Americans once labored and ached and hoped. Today it's considered an "up and coming neighborhood," surrounded by acres of marshy land and estuaries intended for exploration and relaxation by those who can afford it. The houses are nearly all identical with slight differentiations in size and shade and occupants.

My building in Manhattan has rooftop access. You go up 15 floors and suddenly you're the tallest person in midtown. Tonight, it's three hours past midnight and I travel upwards in a last attempt to clear my mind. Sometimes I find that I need the cold air to shock me to sleep. No one else comes up here at this time of night. I sit on a metal garden bench and count one, two, three buildings that I can name. As for the rest, I'm not quite sure. What catalyzed all this life to move in? Is it human nature to be attracted to things that glitter? I consider the life inside those buildings. How the different halls wind and turn. What the echo in the lobby sounds like. If the doorman says hello or if he acts like you're not there. Each window I gaze up at is an entry way to someone's living room or kitchen or bedroom. There are too many people here to avoid distraction. There's too much noise to ever be forced to think. It's a comforting thought, really. It's dark now and I can't see the stars through the clouds of pollution, but I can always see the glow of thousands of living room lamps.



**“well?”**

Tohm Bakelas

anyone can write  
poems about anything—  
what is your excuse?

“declaration against idleness”

Tohm Bakelas

between shadows the  
lonely editor writes his  
poems through the night



## The Minister's Lesson to The King

Shamik Banerjee

Two artists drew a scene in their own styles and ways  
And showed it to the king because that was his will.  
He scrutinized both artworks with a focussed gaze  
And said in awe, "Indeed, both have the perfect skill."

The minister, however, had a different plan.  
He asked him, "O' my Sire, would you not like to know  
Which of these two accomplished virtuosos can  
Produce the most enthralling piece?" The king said, "Oh!

"I like this good proposal. So express your mind."  
The minister replied. "We'll tell them to prepare  
Some artworks of their choice but those should be unsigned,  
So that there is no bias and your judgement's fair."

The time arrived. He scrupulously viewed the hues,  
Details and concepts. All were equally profound.  
He said at last, "I cannot tell which one is whose,  
But both are my state's treasures hence, let both be crowned."

The minister then smiled and said, "My Sire, likewise,  
Almighty, the best artist and judge does not see  
Whose mark His artworks bear: Allah's, Krishna's or Christ's,  
So, as much as His heaven's for you, it's for me."



## Looking Backwards

Richard LeDue

The past makes for better poems  
than flying cars,  
driven by robot butlers,  
who secretly dream of killing you.

The past has a shape  
we can twist and bend  
so it looks like what we want,

but the future is a light  
we are constantly stumbling towards,  
listening to a voice  
that could be god or our conscious  
or a super computer  
keeping the simulation in check.

The future is where Shakespeare is buried.

It is a haven for dusty shelves  
and faded text that once seemed so clear,  
while the poets of tomorrow  
lament their yesterdays.

**“southern poets & midwestern poets know”**

Tohm Bakelas

when bone marrow dries  
and dust settles in its place  
poetry ceases



url:           minimag.space  
subs:          minimagsubmissions@gmail.com  
substack:     minimag.substack.com  
twitter:       @minimag\_lit  
insta:         @minimag\_write

Illustrations by Irina Tall

Insta: @irina369tall

Insta: @irinanov4155

“cold reality for poets”, “declaration against idleness”,  
“well?”, and “southern poets & midwestern poets know”  
by Tohm Bakelas

Insta: @flexyourhead

Website: <https://tohmbakelaspoetry.wordpress.com/>

Book: [Cleaning the Gutters of Hell](#) (Zeitgeist Press, 2023)

“Coroner’s Girl” by Kushal Poddar

Twitter: @Kushalpoet

Insta: @kushalthe poet

Books: [https://www.amazon.in/Kushal-Poddar/e/B07V8KCZ9P/ref=dp\\_byline\\_cont\\_book\\_1](https://www.amazon.in/Kushal-Poddar/e/B07V8KCZ9P/ref=dp_byline_cont_book_1)

“Adrift Amongst Avenues” by Riley Jordan

“The Minister’s Lesson to The King” by Shamik Banerjee

Insta: @where\_tales\_end

“Looking Backwards” by Richard LeDue

Twitter: @LedueRichard

Website: <https://mailchi.mp/256525ddc2fd/stuff-poetry>

editing by Alex Prestia