

# miniMAG

*issue85*  
time+place



## Poly-Fil®

R.Ben Beach

her pillow like alka seltzer  
in my mouth

somewhere between  
evaporate & condense

I did not let go  
for days

maddened into her  
lamentations

the choir yields  
to the chorus

the burned yellow, red  
recording not found

set aside, uncollected  
the entire city awash

wandering, effervescent  
depths of her voice

somewhere between  
evaporate & condense

her pillow like alka seltzer  
in my mouth

I did not let go  
for days



# Spidermanning

L.A. Labuschagne

*is forbidden under pain of torture.*

A sign for every public bath in the South African quarter. This is when a man masturbates into his hand, and slaps the finished product into his friend's eyes, yelling "spiderman!"

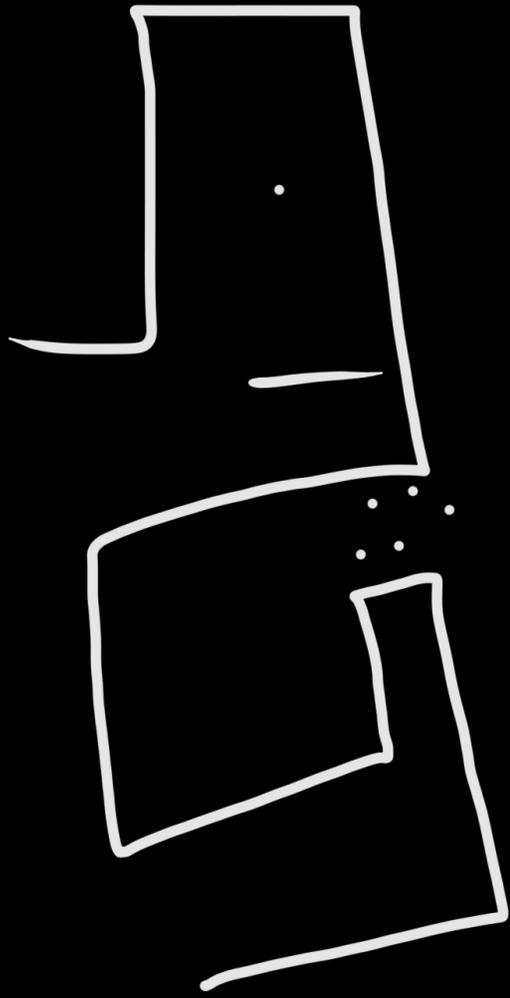
This wastes cum and causes horrific infections.



## Concordia

M.P. Powers

Thursday afternoon in June, sitting in a field  
among 19<sup>th</sup> century  
industrial buildings. Three smokestacks  
stand over you like the Weird Sisters,  
a mighty river burbles  
somewhere beyond  
lush wet grass & marbled trunks of trees.  
Ten minutes ago, you could hear a madman  
raving on a bridge in the sky;  
now, he's gone, his howling replaced  
by two laughing girls  
and the sporadic clang of steel pipes  
driving pilings into the water.  
All these sounds, you think,  
are just one sound, one voice,  
something the afternoon is trying to say,  
something in everything  
making infinitesimal yet everlasting changes.  
Ten minutes ago, the madman in you  
was perched on a bridge  
chastising clouds; now, he's sitting  
in the garden of some quiet church perhaps,  
vine-leaves sprouting  
around his temples, the river dribbling  
quicksilver between his ears.



## Born Overthinker

A.R. Tivadar

Watching imported tv shows and cartoons  
On the staticky screen  
Lockers and cafeterias within high schools  
The race to popularity and young romance  
Walking into class first day of first grade  
Looking around, picking future friends,  
Picking future foes,  
Picking future love interests,  
Planning and expecting my 5 season show

None of it happened.

Playing around on our family computer  
The world wide web  
Searching games, neopets, deviantart,  
Tumblr, instagram, twitter, pornography,  
Discourse, fanfiction, death threats,  
Hiding my name, hiding my face,  
Hiding what I love as I watch another get doxxed  
As if I was relevant enough to cause anger

Nothing ever happened.

Awkward, weird little girl who doesn't like talking

Painfully undiagnosed

Who has no filter, no tact, no remorse, no fear,

Who is a neurotic, anxious, always scared mess,

Thought would be haunted by creepypastas,

Thought would die of asthmatic lungs seizing,

Thought would die of sheer depressive misery,

Nothing happened.

Supply Chain Entry Level Master Data Administrator

A big girl job

Updating and maintaining supplier accounts

Email contacts, payment terms, incoterm

Postal address, isupplier, orbian

A decent salary, bonuses and coupons

My parents use to buy food in bulk

As they did with my sister's before me

I wake up at 4 am and try to take another nap

Another nightmare

In a bad mood I begrudgingly wake up at 7:50

Walk the two steps to my desk and boot up

My laptop shines white in my still dark room

Clock in online and open teams, outlook, notes

Another mail from a panicked supplier

Another mail from my manager

My skull seizes in dread

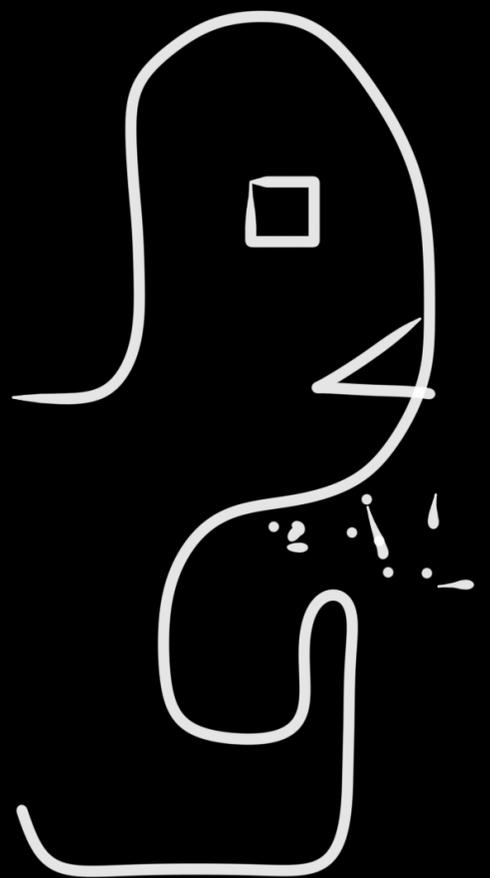
Wonder what is wrong again

Wonder if it's my fault

Wonder where I should look for a new job

Wonder what earful I'll get from my mother

But nothing happens.





## **When we met in Dorset**

Lucy Rumble

Wild highlands / pastured fields /  
sweeping scape / blue sky and sea /  
music made by crickets / and us /  
curling up in cozy arms / by nightfall /  
we become our dreams / of before.

忽略

又岚

终身陪伴着时间

又忽略它

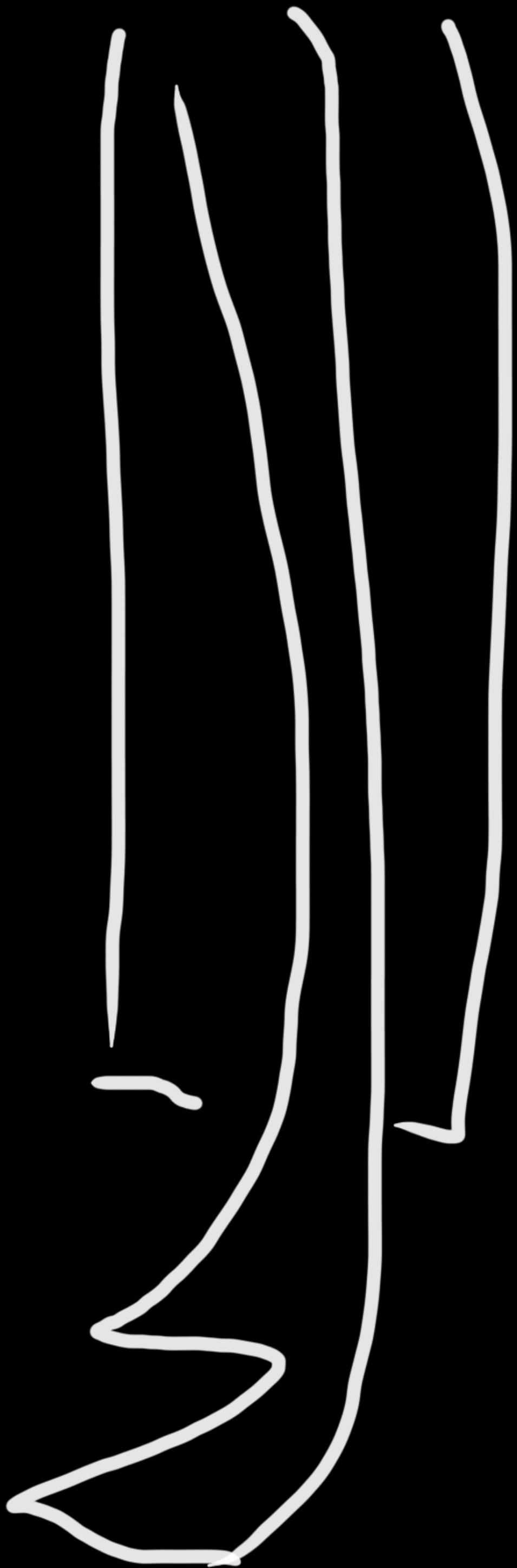
在它面前，我

爱人

喝酒

写诗

迟钝



## Sweeping Autumn

Kushal Poddar

A rattling metal handcart  
scoops up Autumn  
from the road's corners.  
Heat dips and surfaces again.  
One constant wood pigeon  
follows the bough's metronome.  
I watch a youthful proposal  
to be the memory  
of freshly trimmed grass  
in the love's lungs.



# The Tibetan Numerologists of Appalachia: Part 6

Toni Kochensparger

The steps felt like they kept extending, like they stretched on for miles. Peter led the way, with Arthur, behind him. All the boys were waiting in the living room, with his mother and a cake full of candlelight.

*“Happy Birthday to you,”* everyone sang. They all smiled.

Arthur looked at Danny, whose eyes were trained on the ground.

*“Happy Birthday to you.”*

Arthur studied the smiles on Marcus, Chad, and Tom.

*“Happy Birthday, dear Arthur.”*

Arthur felt like he might throw up.

*“Happy Birthday to you!”*

And then everyone cheered. And Tom yelled *a hundred points to Arthur*. And Danny didn't say another word until his mom came and picked him up, the next morning.

\*\*\*

After the last of the boys went home, Arthur went straight to his room and sobbed. The rest of the night, it felt like the floor had turned to glass, or like he was purple, in the face. He forgot about poker and the music.

Peter's present sat, untouched, on the windowsill.

\*\*\*

"Has anyone seen Danny?" Chad asked, the following Monday, at lunch.

"He's sitting over there, with Ronnie Howard, for some reason," said Tom. "I tried to say something to him, but he kind of just murmured, back."

"Maybe we were too hard on him at Arthur's party," said Chad.

"If he can't take a couple of jokes, why bother keeping him around?" said Marcus, digging in to his tray. "He's kind of an asshole, anyway. I mean, he was being a real dickbag to Arthur and it was Arthur's fucking *birthday*."

"Right?" said Chad. "Man, fuck that guy. I guess."

"Yeah," Tom said.

The boys were all quiet, for a minute.

"I mean: what about *you*, Arthur? Didn't you think Danny was being a dick?"

Arthur looked down at his sandwich, then up at Peter, then down at his sandwich, again.

"Arthur," Marcus said. Arthur looked up. "Wasn't Danny being a total asshole?"

Just past Peter's right ear, Arthur could make out the table, where Danny was sitting. He thought maybe Danny was looking at him, but he wasn't sure.

"Not really," Arthur said.

"*Come on*," said Marcus. "He was shitting all over your music."

"And that thing about Sardines," said Chad.

"Point to Chad," Tom said.

"It's probably because you stood up for yourself," Marcus said,

returning to his lunch. “Guys like him are real thin-skinned. They get afraid, easy. They just *act* tough, is all.”

“Maybe he just couldn’t handle being around all of us, anymore,” said Chad, “because he’s so *gay*.”

Tom’s chocolate milk erupted from his nose.

“That’s *it!*” Tom said. Arthur looked at Peter, then down at his shoes.

\*\*\*

“What if he tells the other kids?” Arthur asked Peter. They were studying for their math test in Peter’s room, only both of their notebooks were closed. Peter’s dad had a meeting that was supposed to go late, but they’d closed the door, anyway.

Peter looked out his window. “I don’t think he’s that kind of guy,” he said. “I mean. If he was going to snitch, why not tell everyone at the party?”

“Maybe he was just in shock,” said Arthur.

“Maybe,” Peter said, turning back to Arthur.

“Do you think Chad might be right?” Arthur asked.

“About Danny being an asshole?”

“No,” Arthur said. “I meant about the other thing.”

Peter sat down on the floor, next to Arthur, their backs resting on the side of his kempt bed.

“I mean, Chad was *kidding*,” said Peter.

“No, I know, but I mean. I don’t know.”

“Those guys are kind of assholes,” said Arthur.

“They’re. I mean, *yeah*,” said Peter. “I guess they are.”

“They didn’t have to scare him off, like that.”

“That isn’t what scared him,” said Peter.

“That’s why I wonder about what Chad said.”

The boys looked at each other.

“When did you know?” Arthur asked, after some silence.

“I guess always.”

“How could you know *always*?”

“I mean,” Peter said. He looked down at his shoes. “There wasn’t really anything else. Like, I never thought. Like, before I knew, there wasn’t

anything different, that I thought.”

Arthur was quiet. Then he asked, “Is that why you had to change schools?”

Peter turned his head. When he turned back, Arthur could see a small river, bubbling up, in his eyes.

“I’m scared he’s gonna tell everybody,” Peter said, “and I’m gonna. I’m gonna have to start over, again.”

“Hey,” Arthur said. He pulled Peter into his arms. “It’s not going to happen, again. Maybe Danny’s a. Maybe Danny’s a good *guy*.”

Peter’s tears soaked the chest of Arthur’s Reba shirt, wetting her hair. For a long time, the boys just sat, like that.

Peter looked up at Arthur. They kissed.

Then he looked down. “Your shirt,” he said to Arthur.

“It’s fine,” Arthur said. “It’ll dry.”

“Here,” Peter said, standing up, suddenly. He walked over to his closet and opened it. Every shirt hung neat, catalogued.

Peter retrieved a hanger. “Give it, here,” he said, “so it won’t wrinkle.”

Arthur paused for half-a-moment, before pulling his Reba up over his head and handing it to Peter.

Peter put the shirt on the hanger and hung it up in the closet.

Then he shut the closet and turned around, his back against the slatted door.

The boys looked at each other, across the room, for a long time. Arthur sucked in his stomach.

“Can we dance?” he asked Peter, finally.

Peter’s eyes were beginning to dry. He rubbed them with his hands.

“Yeah,” he said. He smiled, a little. “Yeah, I’ll go get...”

Peter left the room and Arthur looked around. For the first time, he noticed the posters of the sports guys for what they truly were.

He placed a hand on Peter’s bed.

Peter returned with the radio.

“Can we. Can we do it to country?” he asked Arthur.

Arthur took the radio and dialed in to the station. Steel guitars swirled.

This time, the boys did not sway separately. This time, Arthur grabbed

Peter by the hands.

This time, he held the boy close. He could feel Peter's heartbeat ricochet, against his own. He could feel the heat of Peter's cheek, on his face.

For just a moment, everything was perfect.

And then Peter's dad opened the door.

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Cigarette ash littered the green bean casserole, still, when Arthur's mother set it down, on the table. She served her mother first, then her son, who looked down at his lap.

Arthur's grandmother looked from her daughter to her scratch-offs to her daughter, again.

Arthur's mother sat down at the table. Everyone was quiet.

"You know, the two of you will find each other, again," she said, finally. "Maybe not at school, but *after*."

Arthur didn't say a word. He counted the lines of denim on his Levis.

"It's not the end of the *world*," his mother said.

Arthur's grandmother shot his mother a look.

"I mean," his mother said, not even touching her fork. "I mean, I know *right now*. Right now it *feels like*—"

"May I be excused?" Arthur asked, without looking up.

Arthur's mother looked at his grandmother, then back to Arthur.

"Um. Sure," she said. Arthur got up from the table and went upstairs.

Arthur's grandmother shot his mother a look and then took a bite of the casserole.

\*\*\*

Arthur sat on the edge of his bed, unmoving. Outside, the world glistened in the late October sun. In the corner of his room, sticking out of his laundry basket, his Reba shirt taunted him.

Arthur was about to start crying when the sun hit his eyes, momentarily drying them, and he turned toward the window and saw Peter's present, sitting on the sill.

He got up and walked to the window, picking up the box. He sat down on the bed, again and, for a moment, just held the box in his hands, the last thing the boy had left to say to him, preserving the silence, before.

Arthur unwrapped the package.

He took off the lid of the box.

He looked at what was inside and, for the first time since their goodbye that was not a goodbye, his face broke into a smile.

The sunlight had been unexpected, this time of the year. Arthur's Reba shirt stopped taunting him, from the basket.

The whole world came crashing in, through the window.

Arthur's childhood turned into something brand new.

(Parts 1, 2, 3, & 4 of The Tibetan Numerologists of Appalachia can be found in Issues 80, 81, 82, 83 & 84)





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