

miniMAG

issue86
my light inspiring fantasy



The Princess and the Jackal

Donovan Hall

The princess dipped her toes in the pool in the garden behind her father's palace. The cool water tickled her skin as she slid in the rest of her leg. The dry season was at its hottest right before the end, and even the palace servants fanning night and day could not give the princess any relief. So, it had been her idea to make her father build this pool just for her. After all, the princess knew the king would do anything to make her daughter happy.

The princess waded out into the middle of the pool, the water coming up to her waist, feeling the smooth stones rub under the soles of her feet. In the garden, she was perfectly alone. No guards were here to watch her, for it was forbidden for any man, even eunuchs, to gaze upon the princess unclothed, and there were no handmaidens either, for the princess hated them. They were envious little creatures who grew jealous seeing the princess's perfect form—a form they were not allowed to have, for it was the law of the kingdom that no other woman be prettier than her. Whether it meant a scar across the nose or the removal of a breast, it was the king's law that every commoner girl be marred to keep her daughter above all others.

Even now, she stood still in the center of the pool, looking at her reflection in the water, smiling at her perfect face no other could have thanks to her lovely and obedient father.

“What a sight you are!” a voice came from the garden’s fern bushes.

The princess jumped with a start and looked around, whispering, “Who is there? Show yourself!”

A black and orange jackal stepped out of the ferns, with long, pointed ears and lean, smiling face. “Forgive me, princess. I did not mean to frighten you. I’m but a humble jackal.”

“You take me for a fool? No jackals speak. What are you, truthfully?”

The jackal smiled, flashing pointed teeth. “Such a smart princess. I am a spirit, one who heard of your beauty and wanted to see for myself.”

“Oh?” The princess smiled, tilting her head in curiosity. She often received visitors wanting to see her beauty, but until now, they’d all been human. “And what do the spirits know of me?”

“As of yet, not much, but many people in this land pray to me, and many have begged for me to come see you.”

“Well look, if you want. Am I not all you imagined?”

To the princess’s surprise, the jackal let out a whimpering whine and sat by the pool’s edge, head low between his paws. “The sun is so bright, and you are so far. Please come closer, so that I may see you better.”

“Here is close enough,” the princess said. She looked over her shoulder. She was alone, after all, with the closest guard in the palace far behind her.

“But how will I be able to sing about your beauty to the other spirits? They are all so curious to know what you look like.”

“I...don’t know...” The princess hesitated.

“If I can make your song, your beauty will be enshrined for eternity, for we spirits do not die nor forget.” The jackal sighed, sat up on his haunches and moved to return to the fern bushes. “But I guess you do not want that. Farewell, mortal.”

“Wait!” the princess said, wading closer to the jackal. “Here, look!”

The jackal turned back around. “Closer, girl. I need to see every detail.”

The princess waded a little closer. “Is that better?”

“A few more steps. These eyes are eons old, you know.”

The princess, growing frustrated, came right to the edge of the pool. “There. Now surely you can see—”

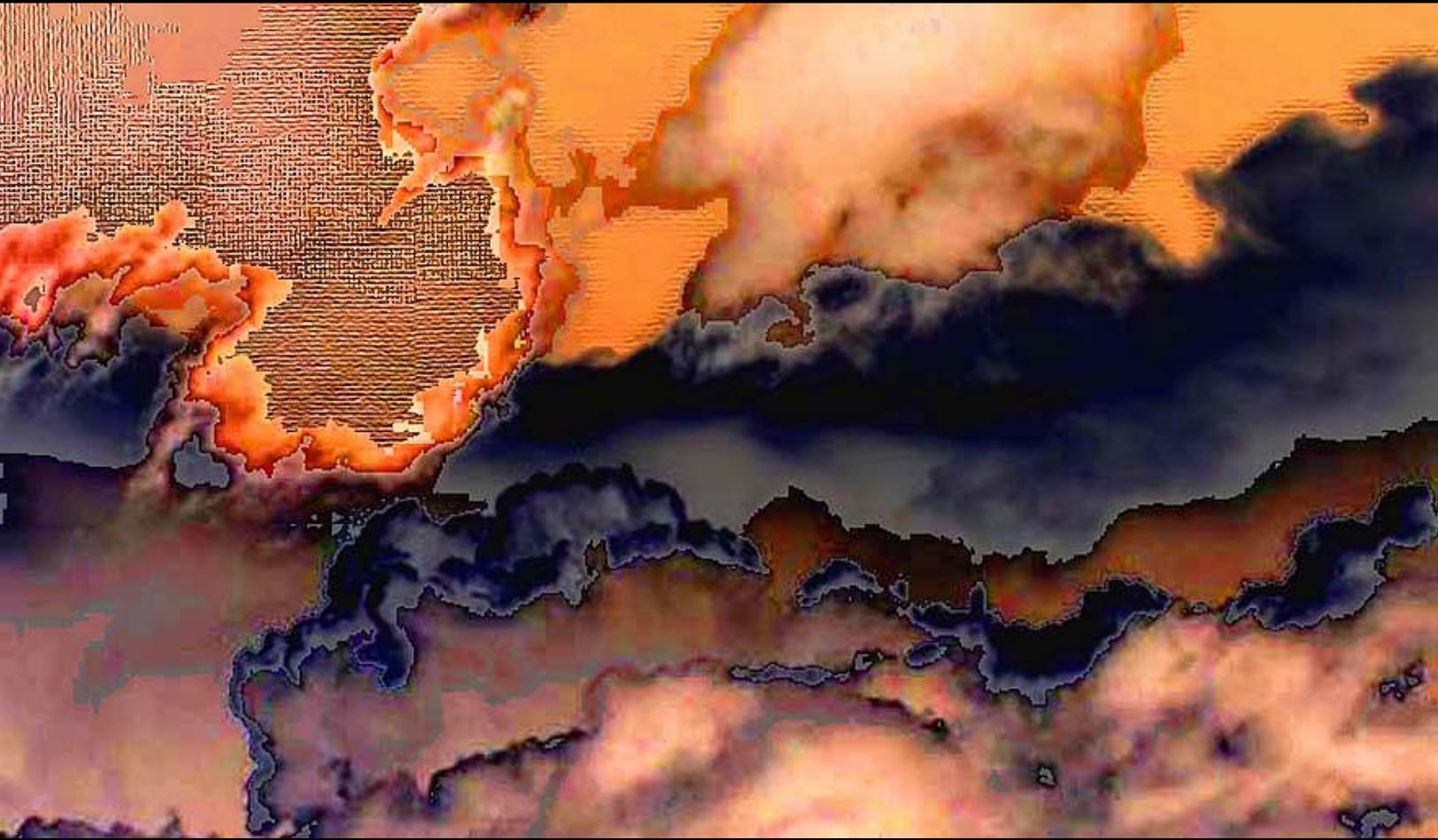
The jackal snatched out one of the princess’s eyes with a swipe of its pointed jaw, snapped his mouth shut, and swallowed it whole. The princess fell back into the water screaming, holding the hole in her face as it cried red. She splashed and choked and cursed, but by the time the guards and handmaidens came rushing into the garden, the jackal had disappeared, and if truth be told, not many even bothered to look for it.



Dragons and Mermaids

Nancu Machlis Rechtman

When dragons lose their hearts to mermaids
It's difficult for love to win out
But not impossible
Because the fire they exhale
Is not always quelled by the waves
That the mermaids ride on
As they reach the uncharted islands
That lie between the ocean and the sky
Where they can rest
And love
Undisturbed
Free from those who will never understand
That the sun and the moon can join together
When magic surrounds them
And anything is possible.



Kirke on Amazon Prime Day

Pixie Bruner

At promptly eleven fifty-eight p.m,
shod in fuzzy mules and
the recommended knit sleep set in apricot
4.1 stars, bought 8% off,
On crisp modal and bamboo viscose blend sheets
under a cloudy miasma of celebrity EDT,
("an irresistibly sexy fragrance of tart green apple, cotton candy,
vanilla marshmallow, hysteria latte, whipped sweet berry,
heart of leather, burnt coffee, metallic adrenaline, anxiety toffee,
with base notes of bacon, laudanum, and amber"),
Gorgon-greige face clay mask cracking-

you shall fire up the Fire tablet,
same app in all the cul de sacs
mirrored in all suburban subdivisions,
funhouse individuality sublimated by a HOA,
queued up before the screen as a abbatoir,
refreshing with those donut-glazed
nine-inch coffin-acrylic manicured nails—

Botoxed,
Liposucted
(too perfect to be f\$&@ed)
Synthetic Ozempic size 6 heifers.

You will buy and buy
and
by and by,
you will still
not have filled
all of your holes.

One-click,
nails clack,
one-click,
cart fill.

A month later, crammed into the postbox,
the crumpled credit card bill—
as you flutter-dropkick him with your lovely
three-hundred dollar cryanoacrylate and mink eyelashes—
your latest husband, Kirke,
shall become
an amnesiac.



Like A Kipper — A Short Play

Ben Macnair

-Int- A Television studio. Host ALAN is introducing his first guest, BRIAN.

ALAN: Hello, and welcome to the show. My first guest this morning is Brian. A man about the town with a sad little story. Now, you may be aware of the Selkie or The Kelpie, they are folklore figures. Either seals, or in some cases horses, who find lonely men and women, become men and women themselves, raise children with these poor souls, and then without any warning, return to the wilderness, abandoning their families and their children. Now, we aren't a programme to judge other people's behaviour, other shows that do that are available, but here is Brian to tell you his side of the story.

BRIAN: Hello Alan.

ALAN: Hello Brian. How are you today?

BRIAN: I am very well thanks, and how are you?

ALAN: I am very well thanks, and thank you for asking. Not many of my guests do that.

BRIAN: Well, it is the boring person who asks no questions, isn't it?

ALAN: I gather you think you are interesting then?

BRIAN: It depends who you ask, really.

ALAN: Anyway, I believe that you have an interesting story to tell.

BRIAN: I do?

ALAN: I hope so. That is why you are here.

BRIAN: I thought I was just here for a nice chat.

ALAN: On live television?

BRIAN: Well, don't they do that? People sit around and have little conversations.

ALAN: You are thinking about the radio Brian.

BRIAN: Are you Chris Packham? Talking about the vole I saw?

ALAN: No, I am not Chris Packham.

BRIAN: Michaela Strachan, talking about an owl?

ALAN: Do I look like a woman? Does she look like a man?

BRIAN: I don't know. I don't watch much of this television you speak about.

ALAN: Ok, right.

BRIAN: Yes.

ALAN: (Sighing) So tell us about your family life, and how you think you were taken in by a Selkie.

BRIAN: I would rather not. Can we not talk about the vole I saw? It was very big, with big teeth, it could have eaten your head.

ALAN: Why might it do that?

BRIAN: They are spiteful you know.

ALAN: Like wasps?

BRIAN: Yes, but with bigger teeth. Much bigger teeth.

ALAN: Can we start with how you met the Selkie?

BRIAN: You mean Lorraine?

ALAN: Yes, Lorraine.

BRIAN: I was at the beach, throwing some stones into the sea, and I saw her.

ALAN: Really. What was she like?

BRIAN: A seal. A big grey seal.

ALAN: So, she wasn't Lorraine at this point?

BRIAN: No, she wasn't.

ALAN: So when did you meet Lorraine as a woman then?

BRIAN: A few days later, I was doing the same thing. There is not much for a sea fisherman to do in the evenings, and as I say, I don't own a television, and after the Archers, I don't like the excitement.

ALAN: Carry on.

BRIAN: Anyway, there I was throwing some stones into the sea, and there she was.

ALAN: Lorraine?

BRIAN: Yes Lorraine.

ALAN: What were your first impressions?

BRIAN: What does she want? Now I will have to start a conversation, and if I don't I will look a bit odd.

ALAN: Or in your case, odder.

BRIAN: Are you saying I am a bit odd Alan?

ALAN: No, not at all. Eccentric is the word I would have used.

BRIAN: Ok, well I am not to everyone's taste, but nobody is, are they Alan?

ALAN: My ratings are pretty good.

BRIAN: Really?

ALAN: Yes, millions of people tune into this show.

BRIAN: Voluntarily?

ALAN: I would hope so. Anyway, tell me more about Lorraine.

BRIAN: Well, Alan it all seemed too obvious in hindsight, but at first in relationships you turn a blind eye to some things, don't you?

ALAN: So you would say that there were some warning signs about how she used to be a seal?

BRIAN: Yes, the tell tale signs were all there. The smell of fish, the whiskers, the limited vocabulary, kept to barks and yelps, the lack of table manners, how she used to eat the cutlery, the glasses, the plates.

ALAN: You have three children don't you though?

BRIAN: Yes, all strong swimmers, took after their mother.

ALAN: So you had the kids on porpoise?

BRIAN: You mean purpose?

ALAN: Just a little joke.

BRIAN: A joke?

ALAN: Yes, sometimes fish puns have their place.

BRIAN: Not here they don't.

ALAN: Ok, we will stop with the fish puns, as they just seem to be giving you a haddock.

BRIAN: You mean headache?

ALAN: Obviously.

BRIAN: Anyway, back to my life story, if we must. I wasn't lonely, I got used to my own company, as you do, but there was something about her. That first night on the beach, the waves gently lapping. The easy flowing conversations, once I got used to the honking in her voice, and how she always went to balance a beach ball on the end of her nose. Don't even get me started on the interest she showed in the car horn, and when she shook my hand, her grip was really quite impressive.

ALAN: Would you have described it as love Brian?

BRIAN: No Alan, I wouldn't have described it as love, more of companionship, of kindred spirits, I gave her twenty years, and she leaves. She stitched me up like a kipper.

ALAN: Which is ironic, as you now believe that she is now a seal. Have there been any other repercussions for you.

BRIAN: Her work phones, occasionally, asking when she might be in, but I tell them I don't know. I see her quite often.

ALAN: As a seal?

BRIAN: Yes, as a seal.

ALAN: Have you tried to talk to her?

BRIAN: No, not yet. The problems is that they all look the same.

ALAN: A bit off, that last statement, Brian.

BRIAN: Maybe, but it is true. I don't want to introduce myself to any old seal, thinking it might be Lorraine. It would be a bit embarrassing to say the least. So that is where we are. The kids always ask when their mum might come back.

ALAN: So by the sounds of it, a seal pretty much managed a successful life as a person then?

BRIAN: Yes, by the sound of it. I personally can't believe how much and how quickly Lorraine developed in the time that I knew her.

ALAN: So, Brian is another way of looking at it that you just bored her, and she moved on, left her life behind, and looked for something more interesting?

BRIAN: I don't think so. I just think that she missed the sea, and went back there.

ALAN: So you think that the seal you saw, and Lorraine were the same celestial being?

BRIAN: Yes, they were.

ALAN: How can you tell, for certain?

BRIAN: A man of the world knows these things, you know.

ALAN: Is that what you really think?

BRIAN: Yes, don't you?

ALAN: Well I don't. I think other things are more likely to have happened.

BRIAN: Like what?

ALAN: One day you were throwing stones in the sea, and you saw a big seal. The next day you were throwing stones into the sea, and you saw a woman. Now, it may be that she was a Selkie, here to comfort lonely souls, but I think there is a very small chance of that being right, don't you?

BRIAN: It is the reason that makes the most sense to me though, Alan.

ALAN: Why?

BRIAN: Because she is the first woman to have shown any interest in me, romantically.

ALAN: Really?

BRIAN: Yes, before I was a fisherman on the sea shore, I worked in Sewage, and I played in a Wurzel's tribute band.

ALAN: Really? Which instrument?

BRIAN: Banjo and Accordion.

ALAN: You know what: I think that you might be right about Lorraine being a selkie.

BRIAN: Really, why?

ALAN: You work in sewage, and you play the banjo.

BRIAN: There is nothing wrong with the banjo.

ALAN: Brian, what is the definition of a gentleman?

BRIAN: I don't know, what is the definition of a gentleman?

ALAN: Someone who can play the banjo, but prefers not to.

BRIAN: I didn't come here to be insulted.

ALAN: What did you come here for then?

BRIAN: A nice day out.

ALAN: And have you had that?

BRIAN: No, not really.

ALAN: Sorry, but them's the breaks.

BRIAN: Can I go now?

ALAN: Wait until the next segment.

BRIAN: When is that?

ALAN: I am just going to introduce it now.

BRIAN: (Glaring, arms crossed) Go on then. We haven't got all day you know.

ALAN: Brian there, ladies and gentleman. A man of the world, who plays the banjo and used to work in sewage, believing that it is more likely that a seal turned into a woman, than a woman showing a romantic interest, and then changing her mind.

BRIAN: (Still glaring) You will be hearing from my lawyers, Alan.

ALAN: Join us after the break as we will be talking to Chris Packham about how voles are getting bigger, and Paul Burrell talking about anything we ask him about that won't be the Royal family.

-Ends-

asteroid rain



*in a barn
doesn't take shoes off
feet get wet*

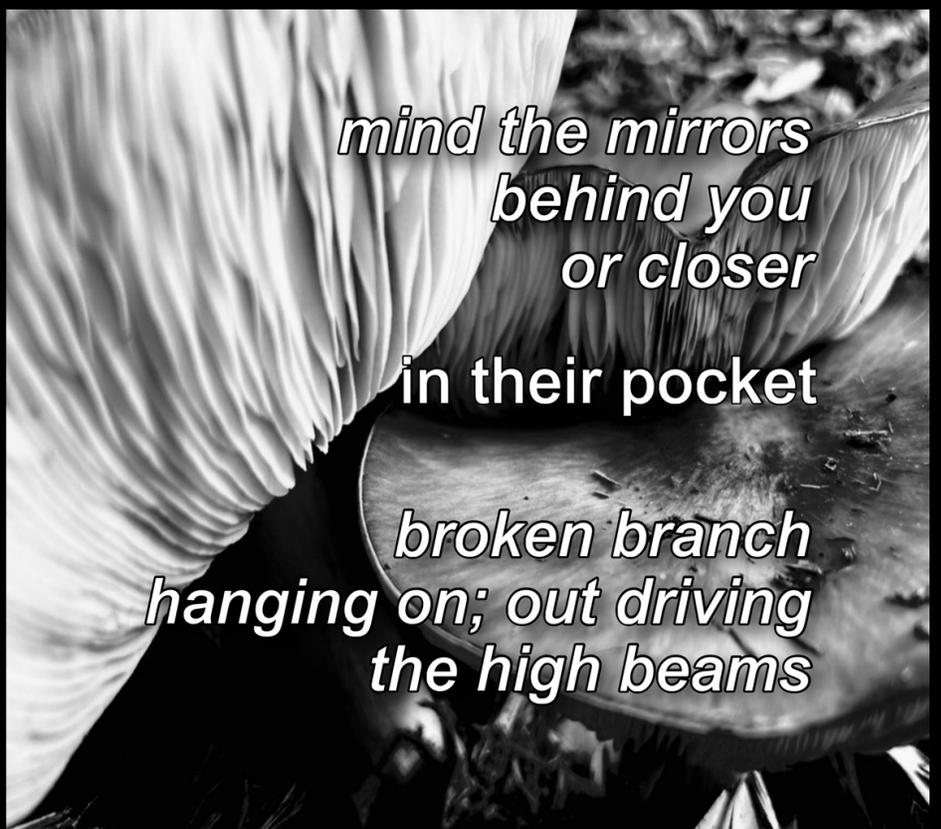
dinosaurs become sparrows

*guano sparkles
patent leather bird feet
dance card full*

umbrella won't open

"Singing in the Rain" - Marjorie Pezzoli
Jerome Berglund

loose morals



*mind the mirrors
behind you
or closer*

in their pocket

*broken branch
hanging on; out driving
the high beams*

mushroom stew

"Dear" - Marjorie Pezzoli
Jerome Berglund

The wind by PJ Harvey

Dorothy Lune

Code is metaphor for plays
in dirt with your fingers, suspect a cupid cat,
his tail articulates the bellow— you oh
you once encoded into DNA like engraving
wet pine. Tchüss, to birds
in dry trees— patron saints of moan sat
between winds, it weaves Satan's spawn, to
trap them like an art piece under
a dear oh dear poem. Cupid
cat thunk up an obstreperous chapel
screaming how water fell in love with dirt—
you, oh you must notice on the hills
those belugas in the wind, no?

TO EVE

Did Lillith send warnings or were you made aware?
I'd been made aware before you. That intelligence.
A motherboard fragmented to be ass thin & wide spread as
Great Hercules. Doppelgangers are
Religious especially when resembling the winds—
A motherboard posed in plain sight concerns you.
Motherboard posed in plain sight concerns me.

Heaven is below Pluto, chilliest den on record.
I'm not in any pain, in my mute image.
On the hills, I built my paper maché lagoon.
Inside it balances a chapel on my eyeball.
On the wall where I rest & wash my hair with.

Many many heavens are hidden.
Listen to the wind blow humming through.
Poor fakes are likely to bite your eye
& burn your irises to copper, humming
through, all you ask me for is good news, oh.



Maybe it's Mable Lean

Kim KJagain Moes

Mable boards the Pirate Ship Spa. Literally a spa in the sky, mostly attended by celebrities and other rich people. After thirty years of double shifts, rationing her food, and living in the dark, Mable has one chance to become beautiful.

She avoids swooning over the celebrities who take no notice of the common girl. She wanders past the dining hall, checking her table assignment. One name at her table is none other than the great-great-granddaughter of that social media guru from the 20s. Talk about being rich because you're born with it!

She bumps into a server in the hallway who pulls her into a viewing room. Multiple ship monitors line the walls. Confusing Mable for a new hire, he says. "Hey newbie, you have GOT to see this bunch of rich bitches!" Mable doesn't correct him – curiosity kills the cat and all that.

He points to a woman leaving the Starboard Spa. "My money is on this one who just got Botox in her lips."

"What is it you're betting on?"

"We bet on who has the most amusing Botox moment." No

reaction from Mable. “Rich people come here to get made-up for this plastic society they created. Only the made-up people can make money, and only people with money can be made-up. It’s a vicious circle.”

“Can’t people who work really hard and struggle to save enough money come here and get made-up too?”

His eyebrows rise into his forehead. “Why would anyone waste their entire life for that? These people are just pretend – they’re avatars. But look at you, you’re a natural.” Mable blushes.

He turns the volume up on his chosen lady who’s telling her friend how much she loves this pirate ship, but with all that Botox, it comes out as, “I love this pile of sh!t.”



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Photography by Jeffrey Spahr-Summers

Page 1: window
Page 4: rose colored reflection
Page 6: the sky according to me
Page 7: middle of the road
Page 16: soft dawn

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“Like a Kipper” by Ben Macnair

“Singing in the Rain” + “Dear” by Marjorie Pezzoli & Jerome William Berglund

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