

**miniMAG**

*issue95*  
*turquoise*

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*turquoise*



# new mexico

Allyson

when she was seven, isabel's mom told her she was a mean person on the car ride to school. you can't punish the shitty personality out of your kid, but she spent the next eleven years trying. isabel tried too.

new mexico was the perfect punishment, because when isabel got tired of trying, she could walk outside and blister under the sun. in the heat, everything glows. the sky blooms orange too early in the morning and holds an eerie blue far too late into the evening. jared lets the opalescent TV light leak into the bedroom at all hours of the day. the thin layer of dust and crystallized fly wings lay static at the back of the nightstand.

she doesn't remember how she met him, or when, but she thinks it may have been at the dive bar under her apartment on her night off.

she likes to imagine there was only a minute between him lying across the filthy counter and him lying next to her in bed. as if the in-between

and everything else didn't exist and it had only been the twenty-second walk upstairs and nothing else.

he was still a stranger.

when he crawls into bed at night, smelling like cigarettes, bad breath, and grime, isabel studies him. her experiment,

her *project*,

her unmoving specimen under the microscope.

the cracks at the top of his fingers, chapped lips parted, and forehead creased in perpetual anger. isabel wonders if she's mean or if she's just angry. is it possible to separate the two?

one day when jared had left, she'd pulled a ragged shoe box out from under piles of dirty laundry and found his supply. cobalt pills tucked under mounds of loose kleenex and junk. the fucker couldn't even bother to bag them up.

she hadn't yelled. hadn't called him up.

didn't even bat an eyelash.

when she shoved the box back under the clothes it rattled like marbles.

he'll wake up in two hours anyway, and isabel will roll over and pretend not to hear him rummaging around in the bathroom. it's her apartment.

there's a lot of clay and dirt in new mexico. isabel thinks about this a lot. thinks about walking downstairs, across the street, and cracking away at the hardened layer of earth.

under the neon light from the bar, she'd dig,

and dig,

and dig.

the first layer would pull away like a scab, revealing the new skin of dirt beneath it. she'd dig until she could climb in, stand in the mess she'd made. she'd let the loose dirt and sand fall in towards her and breathe it all in.

and then she'd have to call jared.

call him up choking and ask him to leave whatever bar or friend's couch or stranger's car and come to her. she'd hang up before he could say a word. when jared finds her, isabel can't decide whether she'll ask for help or beg him to push the remaining piles of dirt back over top of her.



## Good man

Bharti Bansal

There is something about a man's audacity  
Something cruel and inherited  
From his father  
That as much as he despises him,  
He becomes him  
A man never learns the forgiveness given to a son  
He becomes the denial of his mother  
And as long as he believes he can not sing  
He cuts through words  
Only to come back  
With sorry's in his hands  
An audacious man is a wood splinter  
He hurts and hurts and hurts  
And learns to talk in this new language  
He says, "forgive me mother"  
And all his voice echoes is  
I don't need you  
I don't need you



# Staring Man

Joseph Linscott

The staring man stares. This is what he does.

You consider the upheaval of life when a tree falls in the forest, without ears to hear it. Rootless abandon.

He moves closer to you.

You feel his eyes on you, but disregard it.

Scrapes his chair against the carpet, a tearing apart of the floor, but you do not look down. You do not look in his direction.

Silence reverberates down the hall, a humming in your bones. A holding pattern of medical practice, and a woman you know—but never truly know—is waiting for hope or despair.

Inches closer, his warmth radiating against yours—like fog blowing in on an early summer morning as you would wait for the community pool to open, some escape from summer home. Clears his throat.

*Away from this place is only east,* he says.

Ignore it. Pretend as though you do not hear him, that he could not be

talking to you.

*The eyes of children can only look up, bring optimism. The eyes of adults, only down, bring doubt.*

Against the woodgrain wall across from you in the waiting room you see a spider crawling along a divot in the paneling. You feel a crawling up your own arm but refuse to look, hoping it will disperse. Hope he understands your intent, backs against the wall, despairs entwined forever.

He squeezes your arm.

*If a tree falls in the woods, I will know.*

Remain silent, eyes on the spider.

Claw unclenches from your arm and you hear the tearing sound of carpet as he slides away from you. You hear laughter in the receiving room, hidden by frosted glass. As you glance towards the sound you lose sight of the spider, hidden now forever.

The woman you know enters this room, smiling with tear streaks down her ruddy cheeks.

*I will know*, the staring man repeats.

*I will know. I will know. I will know.*



## the production of propylene and its derivatives

Thomas Whittaker

a funeral notice	sunsetted confided smiling an agriculture	feral-scented in the frost of misted windows	cloth-eared of industrial chorus & absent practice
the balkanisation	<i>wrapped</i> of memory in hope's marsh	<i>in a copy</i> of brodsky's moonblinker	<i>of avanti!</i> seaweed crush made subject
of heartache	weightless, the thawing & marbled incense	washing lines & fried fish of surplus love	of cupola perfume in plain-sight cell for daydreaming
in shoals of silence	of a recess unpainted & truthful	a refinding of echoing, childish flaunting	communal sunlight in fake dybala shirts remember?



# The Girl who doesn't Exist

S.J. Walker

After a long day at the office, I am resting against my boyfriend's chest, laying comfortably between his legs in an affectionate position. He has broad shoulders, and his strong arms are wrapped around me while his back is propped up on a couch cushion. We have all our lights turned off except for the glow of the television. A movie is playing when our doorbell rings. We jolt with confusion since we weren't expecting any visitors.

"It better not be your mom," I joke. I press the remote to pause our movie. He pulls out his cell phone from his jean pocket and shines it in front of us. We examine the screen together as he logs into the security camera app so we can see who is at our front door. That's when we see the image of someone's eye examining the lens of the camera closely. Because it is nighttime, the footage is in black and white.

"Creepy," I say.

"It's probably one of the neighborhood kids playing a joke," he suggests. When the eye pulls away from the camera, we see the figure

of a little girl wearing a black hooded sweater over a white dress. She looks to be around the age of 7, petite. Her facial features are partially shaded under the hood but look somewhat pixie-like. She has thin lips formed into the shape of a frown. The time on the phone says it is around 11pm.

“Where are her parents?” I ask aloud. “Why is she out so late? Maybe we should see what she needs.”

“No,” my boyfriend says. I feel him stiffen behind me. I turn my head around so I can see his face. His eyes are wide, focused on the phone screen, looking weary about something. I return my eyes to the screen to try to figure out what is off about the picture. That’s when I notice that the girl is holding an object. I focus my eyes on it, stunned when I see her tiny hand gripping the handle of a knife.

“The hell?” I say under my breath.

Her eyes are on the camera as she starts jostling with the handle on the door.

“The door is locked, right?” I check with my boyfriend. That’s when he says three chilling words.

“I hope so.”

We both jump off the couch to our feet, bracing ourselves. He flicks on the light switch and runs to the kitchen to pull a knife out from a drawer.

“You’re not going to hurt her, are you?” I ask.

“Only in self-defense,” he answers. I’m shocked. A big man like him should be able to overpower a little girl. In his haste to the kitchen, he has dropped his cell phone to the floor next to our living room coffee table. I pick it up and examine the screen to check if the girl is still trying to break into our house. She is standing, staring at me through the lens, her lips pursed into a thin smile now. She then speaks to the camera. Her dainty voice contains a dark undertone to it:

“I don’t want to be conceived... and now, I won’t be.”

*What?*

After her words are spoken, her figure vanishes like dust blown in the wind. I drop the cell phone, shocked as I feel the very real sense that I have just witnessed a ghost.

“What? What is she doing now?” My boyfriend is eager. I see him standing in the kitchen, staring at me with his phone. He is braced for action with the knife still in hand. *A knife against a little girl?*

*Really?*

Suddenly, when I look at him, I am repulsed.

End.

## FAIRY TALE

John Grey

And they both  
lived happily  
ever after...

he,  
with the firm belief that  
rightness or wrongness  
of actions  
is determined solely  
by the extent  
to which they lead  
to good or bad  
consequences

she,  
with the house  
and the car.



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