



The Magician

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POETRY & ILLUSTRATION – APR 2026



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ISSUE 1

The Magician

EDITOR'S NOTE

Knights of Pen and Ink have bided our time since our debut as *The Fool*, honing our craft to create an issue dedicated to the next figure in our exploration of universal archetypes; *The Magician*.

Magic can be found everywhere. It's up to individuals to weave it into new forms, where even the mundane can be made spectacle.

This is a time for learning and development, for being unafraid to make mistakes in our experimentations and observations of everyday experiences. Our fantastic poets have submitted their tricks and fancies, telling stories of the pockets of magic in their lives and the ways it fuels their creative practice.

FREDDY J. LAMBERT

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I ISSUE



FJL

The Magician

KATIE BESWICK

I

No card tricks.
You worked magic
on the polished floor
dancing around me, slick.
A pub singer crooned
Johnny Cash.
Your feet marked the ground
like chalk circles.
Your hands moved like flames.
The pub shone with gilt statues
gold frames. That smile. Lucky.
You took off your grey jumper
your shirt was white
with small holes — a little mucky.
You tapped your foot
out of time. Walked the line.
Held out your hand. Took mine.
The disco ball swirling
spots of light
dappled your shaved head
your compact body
hard with secrets.
Water to wine.
You offered the bottle —
Another glass? A tequila shot?
I declined.

Chrissie Reads My Tea Leaves

ANSUYA

She pours hot water into a turquoise pot.
Her pale fingers shake the tin.

Charcoal tea leaves tumble out. I inhale
coconut, mint and sweet orange.

She reads my eyes and hands me a cup.
Sip slowly. Let the ghosts settle, she says.

Bitter earthy roots never seeing the light
linger in my mouth.

She takes the cup, turns it on its side.
Her blue-green eyes flicker.

*You've ran through fire, survived.
I see a number seven, a crimson door,*

*a key. You'll turn the lock, enter each room,
walk through your days as a magician.*



FJL

The Day I Nearly Went to Graceland

EDWARD ALPORT

Well, what do you do in Memphis at the weekend?
We're winding down the meeting
to conversation and hasty tidying.
I said I thought I'd go to Graceland.
I'd planned to go pay homage to The King.

That's how I'd planned the trip. This stage:
Now the Friday meeting's done.
Saturday writing up. Sunday pilgrimage.
Don't, my colleagues said as one:
Don't, unless you want to blight
your illusions. Poor white with money is still poor white,
just larger, shinier, and with more sequins.

Snotty crowd, I thought, and headed south,
down the 51. No distance. No distance for a Sunday pilgrimage
to seek the sequined icon of my youth.
My first thought was: How small. Where's the mansion?
But when I mooched around the fence
there might not be the body of a Chevy, rusting on its suspension
like at the trailer of any white trash dude.
Instead there were two rusting aircraft hulls.
And: Those boys were right, I thought. No difference.
Just larger, shinier and with more sequins.

I stayed outside. My illusions remain unshaken.
And now I wonder how many journeys I've never taken.
The journey's the thing. Places are just places, much the same
except for co-ordinates and weight of history
From how many pilgrimages have I turned away in shame
in case there were no miracles to see?



FJL

This Trick

PAUL HOSTOVSKY

Pick a disease, any disease.
Memorize it. Now put it back
with the other diseases. Shuffle them,
put them in separate piles,
the corners loosely interlocking.
Square them. Fan them out,
splayed and facedown like
so many bodies. The trick
is recognizing your disease
isn't yours. Isn't you. It could
have been any of them. This is the one
you were dealt, so deal with it
and when the time comes to fold,
fold. Forfeit. Because you lose
everything. Everybody does.
There are no winners. There is only
this game, this dream, this trick
of making the whole thing disappear.

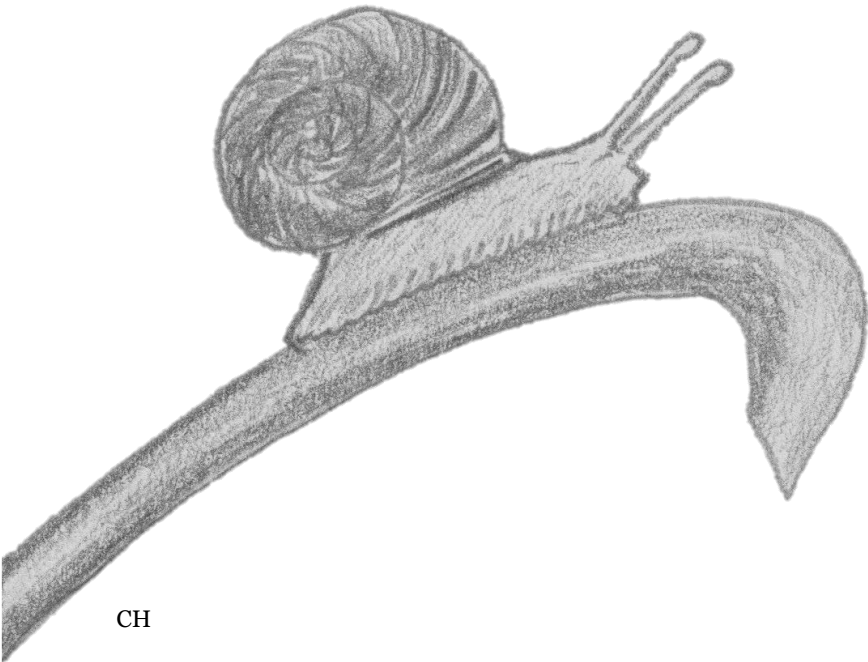
a lame god is still a god

FREDDY J. LAMBERT

disability defines my sin
it matters not that I am
skilled and intelligent
only that there are
tools moving me from
room to room and not
my own limbs, dust-hazed

it matters not that I am
advancing this new world
around us in stone-gold
brick to brick and still
my own repugnant face
deems me unfit to live
uncriticised by the vain

show me a man, any man
who is not broken in
the eyes of the dirt-bound
show me a man, any man
who is not stronger by it
who is not a talent to be
admired in his own field



My Neighbour Rises Like Sunset

ANSUYA

She bows to the snail, looks up
at the tiny emerald buds dangling off a rose.

She inhales their soft pink petals, her
fingers trace each toothed edge.

She shakes the dew on the lip of a saffron
sunflower. Her feet heel toe over

milky stones, laughing as if she's being
tickled by the Gods.

A long tailed dove coo-coo-coo, coo-coo-coo.
She raises her arms to the living

as a streak of gold light breaks through mist
like she's in the presence of angels.

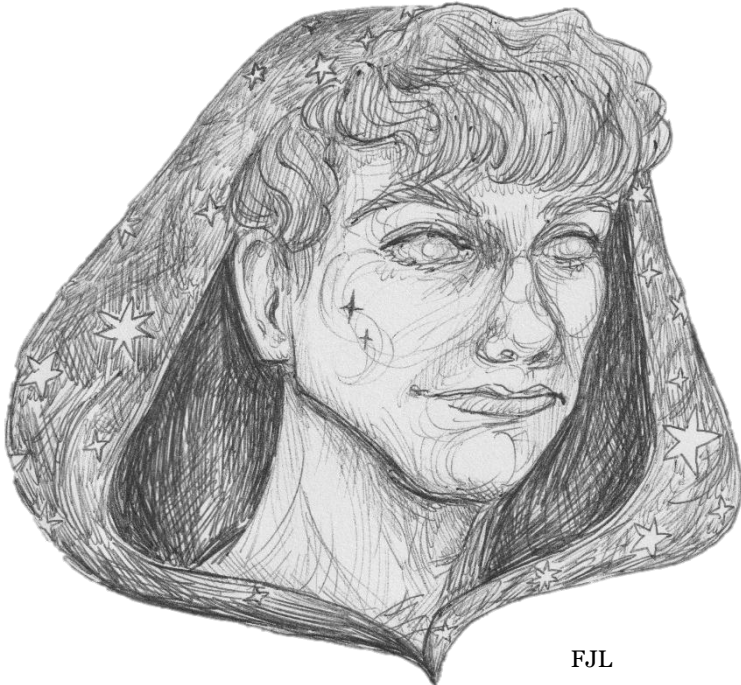


The Saint

EDWARD ALPORT

At first, the Saint declined to notice me,
and gazed at whatever Saints gaze at.
I was too louche, too rooted like a tree
and he was blowing in the wind through my branches.
He would not speak, but in the end his eyes
did condescend to notice me.
I was still not worth a wetted lip
and all communication was restricted to
a frown of one who finds an item out of place.

I did not attempt to speak; he was too pure
and his gaze ignited paper in the street.
I was not anxious to have him gaze at me
and concluded that any wisdom was not worth the risk.



FJL

TRICKSTER

ANSUYA

I'm cleaning the fridge,
trickster whispers
you're wasting time.
She takes my hand,
gives me a pen.

Catch the words.
Pin them down, let them
dazzle, she says.
I look out, she taps my
shoulder. *A game*
come on, she calls.

I disappear inside the lines.
A grey pigeon shits on the ledge.
Don't stare at shit, she says.
She takes my phone,
moves into my head,
dances through my nerves
until I finish my poem.

Then she asks, *can I help?*
I need a magician's wand, I say.
Trickster throws up
all my words,
runs across the page
stretches out the lines
and disappears.



EH



EH

August Personages

EDWARD ALPORT

Let me tell you of this guy. We shared a desk,
and then an office, for how many years?
He was a big man, towering over me (and I'm not small)
big in every way and always the loudest person in the park.
But things, he made them happen, driving a willing team.
His laugh was loudest when we met a height
that even he had thought a bit extreme.

He was one who the stories loved and crowded round.
The hero. Always at the centre.
They flocked to him, unasked, from every side.
Who took six days sick-leave and was seen
In the Fastnet Race's winning crew?
Who slapped the desk and made the hotel scurry?
And every legend has a seed that's true.

But half the stories, in true life, he wasn't there,
or maybe he was standing in the wings, watching,
maybe cheering on, but when the tales were told,
and not by him, well, he was on the spot.
Right at the centre once again, because
whoever slapped the desk, it should have been him,
and the story sounded better if it was.

He joins an august company, of story magnets through the years.
King Arthur, Robin Hood, even poor, meek Jesus as He bleeds.
How many leaders, outlaws and messiahs
went into building the heroes and their stories we tell?
I wonder if they'd recognise their deeds.

MISDIRECTION

JOHN BIRTWHISTLE

He's an artist, this housepainter. Whenever I climb
the stairs to see how he's getting on, he deftly
leads off into his hobby of watercourses that run
under neighbouring streets he's discovered
from maps and folklore, until I feel that it's me
that's distracting and should be letting him get on.

When he says he's finished and I come to inspect,
I can't help seeing a splash of window-sill
colour on the paler wall, exactly where he's already
packed up all his brushes and pots. As though just
noticing it himself, he flicks out the blemish
with a flourish to set both our minds at rest.



Perfect Disappearances

PAUL HOSTOVSKY

This poem is for all the writers
writing. On their laptops, desktops, smartphones,
legal pads, napkins, palms
of their hands—desperate to get it down
before it disappears
like the phone number of the most amazing person you just met
and have to see again—just have to—
so you write it on your own skin
and walk off into the world alone
with the whole world in your hand. God
help the writers in love with the words that disappear
like disappearing trains you catch
by running after them,
losing a shoe, a hat, an earring, a spouse—a lifetime
of chasing the disappearing words,
breathlessly reaching for them,
grabbing hold and hoisting yourself up
onto the caboose, entering the rhythm
of those corridors moving through the world
as you move through them, feeling your way,
looking up and down and all around for
that dream you dreamed and followed all the way here.



FJL



A FINAL ROUND OF APPLAUSE
AND A HEARTY HUZZAH FOR
OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Edward Alport
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Katie Beswick
John Birtwhistle
Paul Hostovsky
Cathie Hoare
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Freddy J. Lambert

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for the next issue of
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