

mê tis

a literary magazine for the Ivy Tech community

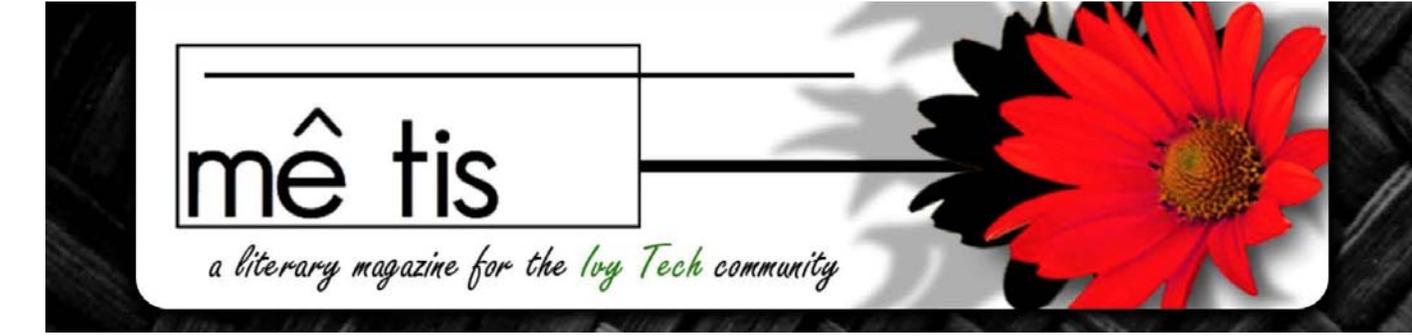
Las Vegas Illusionists

By Ashley Bayer

When I was young, I loved them.
They were the Magic men on television.
Their stage a thick stretch of tinfoil
and glints of tinsel that coiled
the light around their bowties.
With slight of hand they deal but
don't reveal the secrets of cheap tricks.

Me in PJ's with Jacob Ladder legs
Folded beneath as I leaned with
Shoulders hunched toward the screen
While I crunched popcorn in
concentrated admiration. My smile
a gleam of two crooked teeth

Like French doors open and shaken by peals
of laughter soon after the Magic man
appeared in the back of the room.
Applause a mushroom cloud
of thunder that boomed quiet as
his hand tuned down the audience sound
to a rush of wind through wheat leaves.



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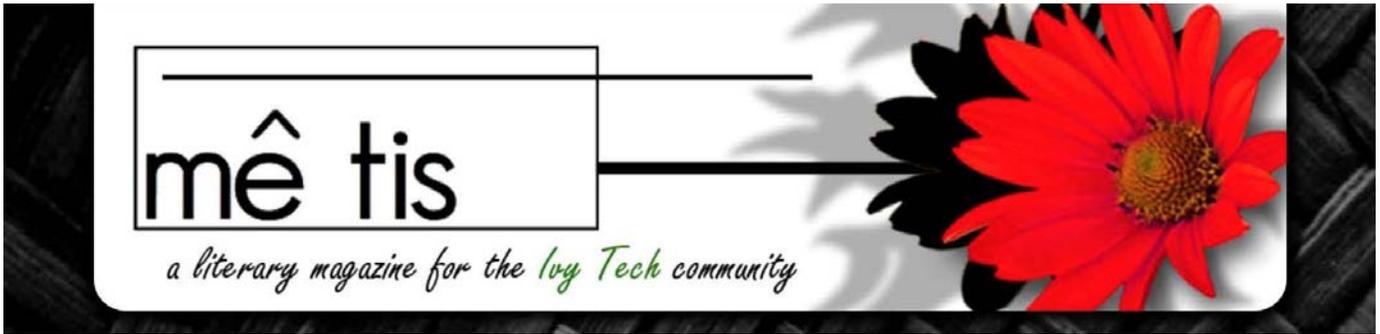
The Magic man was once the one
who ran from the tick of time
coming to a close. From the final
breath beneath the waves of a water tank
or the pressure of dirt on a fresh grave.
The sword swallows with iron insides.

Now they remain nameless. My brain unable
to recall faces that escaped once again.
I wanted to be one of them. A magic woman
armed to uneven teeth with illusions.
I strived to disappear knives into napkins
and napkins into sleeves. To squeeze dollars
from my ears to keep the peace between parents.

But the Magic men merely call out "Suspend,"
and women float like maple seeds,
their hair a spray of seaside foam,
scented skin like bitten nectarines.
Beautiful assistants under control.
And I could see they left me alone.

Because my face is flat, and my
body was a bundle of matchsticks,
underdeveloped, I didn't like dresses.
My hair chopped short like tinder because
of the head lice, compliments of my kid sister.
With braise blossoms on my knees, my morn asked
how I would ever be the beauty queen of the Philippines.

Sawed in half, I saw a rabbit hop from Mother's hat.



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Ashley once thought she ate a peanut butter sandwich that sent her back in time. She lives in Bloomington with two cats, some friends, and a large pile of dishes that refuse to clean themselves. She enjoys yelling “boom baby!” while playing basketball, watching *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and “getting pitted, so pitted.”