

SMILE AT THE CROCODILE

"Oh my god, they're coming at us. Shoot them. Shoot. Them!!!!"

January 14th 2023, Hochgürtle, 2392 meters above sea level, 7:14 am sharp. Even though my words seem to come straight out of a nightmarish war movie,

we're witnessing the dreamiest of scenes. Model Marty cradles her baby daughter Maëlle in a pink silk scarf, as rosy as the sleepy sky slowly awakening above the idyllic mountaintop we're standing on. Dawn moves in quickly, and in a matter of seconds, the same sky is ablaze with hues of red and blue. Then out of that very same blue, a set of bright orange clouds appears on the horizon lighting up mother and daughter - a real-life Madonna painting. Marty's golden eyes and lips mirror the colour palette of daybreak. The perfect shot. Except it's over in the blink of an eye, and we cannot shoot it in time. Despite my military level of excitement. Make-up artist and savant du jour Sanne offers some consolation: *"Everything happens for a reason; there are no coincidences, you'll see!"* For this cover story we envisioned a surreal, blurry, absurd tale about the magic of the mountains. A dreamy bubble that echoes our own childhood recollections of family holidays in the snow: sunburn on our puffy cheeks, smearing brightly coloured SPF lipstick all over our faces, smuggling candy in every pocket, getting entangled with our ski pass, bringing totally inadequate and unnecessary toys *"just in case"* and carrying our skis the wrong way around. Models Marty and Nick had never been to the mountains and recreate our childhood memories with a cheeky twist and a good sense of humour. So far, so good - except that the inflatable crocodile we figured had to be a part of this picture appears to have gotten lost in transit. The airy fellow was ordered at a Chinese shop in Mallorca, shipped to the mainland, but then got put on a train to the wrong side of Tyrol. True story. And it's far from our only setback. The orange clouds too, refuse to collaborate and vanish the moment we want to catch them on film.

Gone forever... but, you know what: it's okay. This magazine is about making moments happen, not chasing them. And when we ourselves forget this in the light of some hypnotic Madonna scene, we can always count on the almighty mountains or international shipping hassle to teach us a lesson in humility. Coincidentally - or not - photographer Volvoretta suggested shooting this entire story on analogue film, a series of authentic moments that may or may not translate to beautiful pictures. A tad unnerving but

ever so refreshing. And our learning curve hasn't stopped there. This issue is about magic, about nature's power and people's stories. We traced mythical travel roads and ancient tales, learned about the perks of dreaming big, met with a mother slash sorceress, slept in what was most definitely a happily haunted castle, got to know the clairvoyant secret in the stars and managed to smuggle a reptile or two into the spotlights along the way. The first was a dinosaur named Isaak - you'll run into him further down these pages. And the second one came sliding at me with a bellowing roar a few days after the sunrise scene, just as we were about to finish our last shot. In truth: my partner Steph was the one making the victorious sound as she sleighed towards me on a bright green thing that looked perfectly out of place in a world of mountain goats and groundhogs: *"It's here!!!"* Once I understood what it was, my mind snapped back into warzone-mode again: *"Oh my god, it's him: it's the crocodile! Shoot him! Shoot. Him!!!"*

Everything happens for a reason and magic is real - you'll find it most of all when you're not looking for it. So, embrace the unknown, open your hearts to senseless reptile product placement and enjoy the one and only magic issue!

—Isabelle Vander Heyde & Stephanie Fiz



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