

HAUTE DISH

The Arts and Literary Magazine of Metro State University



Spring 2023

Editor's Letter

“There is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of the birds, the ebb and flow of the tides, the folded bud ready for the spring. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature - the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter.”

- Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder*

This is the Spring 2023 issue of Haute Dish – The Arts and Literature Magazine of Metro State University. It comes after what seems like a winter of endless snow. As we look forward to warmer and greener seasons, I would like to take this opportunity to invite anyone who is interested in participating or contributing to any aspect of the production of Haute Dish to do so. You can contribute by submitting work or participate by becoming involved in the production of the magazine as an editor.

I continue to find participating in Haute Dish rewarding and believe it is a valuable experience that can benefit anyone.

You can reach out by emailing hautedish@metrostate.com if you have any questions.

As always I would like to thank all those that make Haute Dish happen and look forward to seeing new work and new faces as we look ahead to the issues yet to come.

Enjoy,
Josh Rieger

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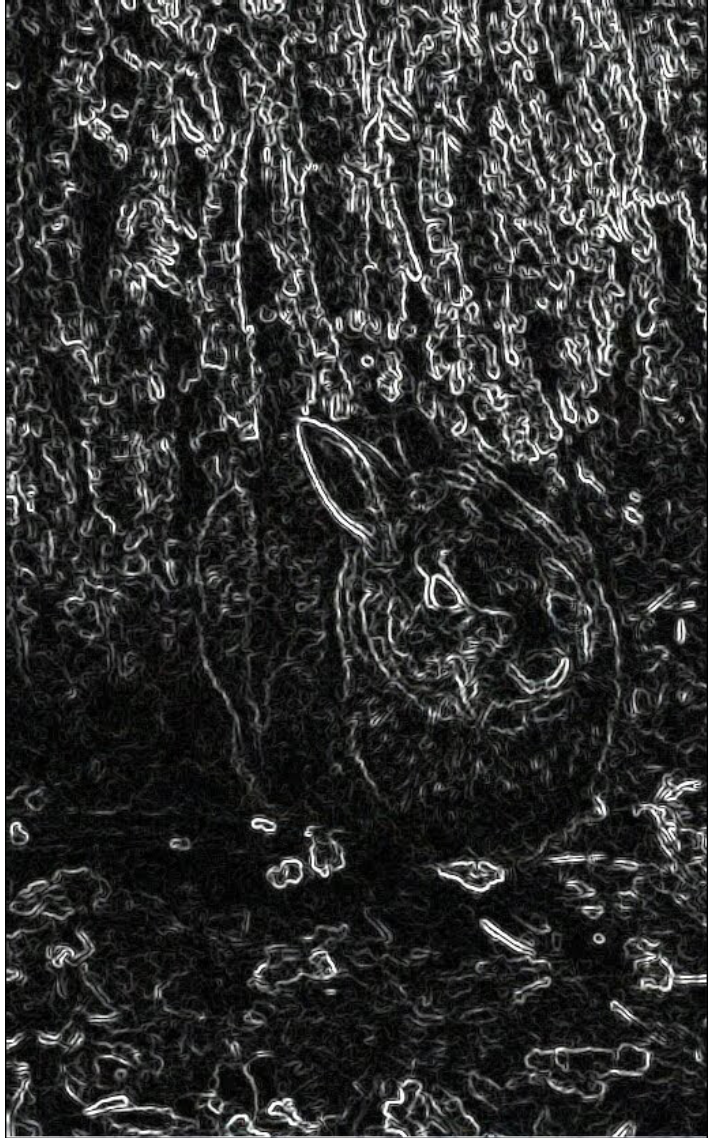
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Untitled Haiku Written While Walking
by Robin Locke

Snowy silence,
crunches. A poem, a bird,
the cry of winter.



Down the Rabbit Hole by Robin Locke

FROM UNDER THE LIGHT OF A WINTER MARIGOLD

by Tim Knight

I remember—the doctor said, “It’s almost time.” And at that moment, like the doctor’s soft voice was a timer to your womb, you began to scream. You clenched the bed frame until your knuckles bloomed red. I put my hand to your forehead. You were so hot; it felt like steam would escape from your mouth and fill the space from wall to wall in a thick veil of fog.

So, I took your hand in mine. I squeezed with all my love, trying to tell you, *I’m here—I’m here with you*. I put my lips to the back of your hand and kissed it.

“Push.” said the nurse.

--

Do you remember when we met, the song that played? I saw you there, so bright, arranging an array of flowers outside the grocery store, your red autumn hair mouthing the lyrics to the lilacs as the customers’ bodies opened and closed the door, muting and spilling the sound out onto the sidewalk.

... far, wherever.... are

I believe.... heart.... go on

Once...., you open....

And... here...my heart

..my heart will go....

You returned to our world from your headspace in the flower basket and glanced up at me with bright baby marigolds in your gentle fingers.

“Here,” you said as you delicately dug into the pot and handed me one of the frail flowers, roots, and all. I began to feel my heart start to return from some far-off place.

I glanced from the Marigold in my hand to your face; I had trouble looking at it, enchanting me like a winter’s fire, but through my peripheries I saw your piercing blue eyes meet mine. I turned away and scoured through the thump of my heart for something to say,

“Why the roots? I asked, which came out in a whisper.

“So, it will live.”

--

When you moved into my apartment, with the stove that sparked when you turned the switch, it was the first time I knew. I remember being so nervous, petrified, on edge as you unpacked your things and strewed my manilla walls with life.

It must have been when I kneeled and peered into one of your cardboard boxes, because as I gathered up one of the scrapbooks and peered into you through your well-worn picture of Holly, your dead childhood dog, the photograph wrinkled from pressing your small body into the chemical paper as you writhed and wept at night, pretending the picture was wholly Holly, fur, and spirit, and all—you silently howling in your mind at

the moon, pleading for hours upon its looming gray visage, *please bring her back*, or when I opened the box with two, not one, but two copies of *Flashdance*. Then, after unpacking most of the other precious things in the box, reaching into the bottom, and seeing a copy of *Gravity's Rainbow*. I know you being so pragmatic, would *say it isn't true*, but it is. After seeing this simple complexity, a spectrum of nuance, your love for sustenance and sensuality nestled haphazardly into this box, I saw you there—all of you. The hidden beauty you hold, meeting me like a flood of words.

Was there a singular instance when I knew I loved you? A finger's flick of a moment—like a light switch? Perhaps it doesn't matter—because at night's darkest, after our routines became entwined—when you lay your autumn hair on my chest—when we warmed one another through the holding of one another—and we would read from the book of our skin—aloud—and we would weep, or laugh—in those moments, our love is all that I felt—and so, it was all there was.

“Push,” said the nurse. Again and again, she said it. I thought: You Know! We already know—*damn it!* And I clenched my fist tight.

After the waves of contractions came and went, after your tormented cries ceased, for a time, no one spoke. Cassandra did not cry. The machines absent. The doctor took the wet, gooey mass of hair, and flesh, and fresh bone and of you and me. Slouching over, she handed Cassandra to the nurse. As the nurse took Cassandra to the sink and began to wash her in the sanitary area, I began to weep. I couldn't control myself. Through the crook of your left leg, with only a glimpse, I witnessed, engrained the moment into my mind, a section of her face. She had your blue eyes and my hobbit feet. Your autumn hair and my button nose. Your caring lips and my little ears. I have never seen anything more wondrous, and I suppose I never will again.

After the air entered and exited my lungs with ease, the nurse began to walk back toward us. I felt as though she was gliding as she approached. Cassandra so small, bundled in her blue baby-sized blanket, in the crook of the nurse's arm. Her blueberry spring eyes open, entranced by each new sensation. You sat up, still pale and ghostly from the exertion of creating such a miracle. Cassandra squirmed as the nurse brought her closer. I could tell she was about to cry, but then you outstretched your arms and cradled her. Cassandra met your gaze and let out a little coo of joy. Then you let out a gasp, little droplets of overwhelming beauty dotting your hospital gown. You closed your eyes and kissed the back of my hand: exhausted, unconditionally present.

For a time, we three lay there, taking in how strange and beautiful our life was.

Then Cassandra reached for your nose, and I believe, in her last moments, as her new heart thumped for the last time, she felt all we felt for her—then simply fell asleep.

You wailed, and the nurses and the doctors came running.

“What's wrong?” said the first nurse through the door, but the words would not come. You simply held your mouth to her blue body.

I still keep the marigold on my windowsill. And even though it's an annual, somehow, It's thriving and may be the only plant I ever kept alive.

In winter, I made it a tradition to watch *Flashdance* at least once a year. Usually, in the weeks following Christmas, when dark overtakes the day by four o'clock and hardly a sunbeam shines in through the afternoon shades. I used to despise that movie and, to be frank, only endured it for you, but now, somehow, I've come to enjoy it. This year, I finished it in one sitting. Then, as the credits began to roll, as I arose from my chair to grab a napkin to wipe my tears, a flash caught my eye through the moonlit window. I saw as I turned my head to face the flick of light, as snow fell from the trees, the marigold in the corner of the windowsill, reaching up towards whatever light the moon held. It began to flutter as if wind was blowing in air from the walls. I went over to the plant and took the leaf in my hand. I bent down and carefully slid my hand over its green palm. I felt something beneath it and turned it over.

A bumblebee, fat on marigold's pollen, buzzed off into the dim fluorescent light of my small, dark apartment. A trail of golden dust sparkled as it retreated, and I thought of your kiss.

I opened the window, the winter storm blowing bitter currents, chilling me through its swirling gale. As my hands met the cold—I cupped them—whispered a letter of my love, a prayer, into my pressed palms—although I still am not a holy man, and after my hands had chilled, after I kissed every bead of my eternal, unconditional love and sent it off in a sacred trail, I hoped, somehow, that my letter's light will refract off the moon, and wherever Cassandra is, like how we see the sun's light, she too, will see a similar lux through the glow of the moon—my message. Perhaps, wherever you are, she sees yours as well.

Come Back

by Axel Keylander

I come back to it, you know.

I go walking my old paths
 half-forgotten tree-haunts
Where I tread on the sticks
 that were my swords
 still pretend I'm a knight
 On a quest for...what?

I fall into the arms of my old chair
Where I'd hold my thoughts
 I still hold some of them sacred...don't I?
In my bones I can feel how
 I laid hands
 On the grave
And in my heart I can see
How I lost my way.

I rove and stray
Under the grey skies and cold rain,
 Or the gold of autumn, the green of spring
I go back to roam among the shards from
 when the seasons changed on time
And my seasons were
 Just a
 distant worry.

I come back to it and forget
Forget and remember as best
 I can...I'm trying
 piecing it together
 like a child's broken sword
To recover the fragments and
 Place them in honor
 Like regrown leaves on
 a barren tree.

A Small Town in Italy
by Sandy Talbott



Squash/Corn/Beans
by Tim Knight

Even as sprouts you wrapped
one another in roots

when dew turned to frost
your leaves bent, but did not break

you laughed at the wind
howled at the wolves

fostered feasts
under blue harvest moon

curved each blow from the cold
and shaped it into second summer

but as the garden froze into tundra
rabbits ravaged your autumn yield

worms gnawed upon
your decayed gifts

and when the sun set

the corn stalks once acres high
shed its golden hair

the bean plant bowed down:
its stalk bent in mourning

only then, as a wilted weed
did I digest

why flowers fade
shed their colored petals:

preparation for the cold:
the dead hand of winter

Boom

Terrance Gallo



MORGANTOWN

by Louise Reed

As long as I can remember, my dad was never one to share his childhood memories with me. We never had that type of relationship, so him driving me around his hometown, sharing stories about growing up was strange to say the least.

My dad and I were more or less like best friends. Growing up, we never had serious conversations that most parents would have with their kids. We were never very sentimental either. We bonded over TV and movies. There was a moment growing up where my dad told me if he didn't show me Mr. Show sketches, he was a failure of a parent. My dad was the fun parent. But I think that's what happens when your parents have you when they're twenty. They're just kids having kids. When it was my dad's weekend, he was the parent who let me stay up late, drink soda, eat dinner in the living room and even let me watch South Park. Not every eight-year-old can brag about that.

The one thing I do remember him sharing with me while growing up was how much he hated going back to his hometown, even for the holidays. He never gave me an exact reason besides it being a "hicktown". I remember as a little kid driving to my grandparents with him from Pittsburgh. The minute we would get into town, he was itching to leave.

But here we are on my 21st birthday trip in Morgantown, West Virginia; the tiny little college town where my dad grew up. During fall and spring, it was full of college students wandering up and down the downtown streets. During the summer the college students became dormant. The only people who wandered the streets were townies, as my dad said.

We drove down a narrow cobblestone street on our way to my grandparent's house. The buildings were all empty and boarded up. Without college students out and about it felt like we were driving through a ghost town.

"See that old building?" my dad asked. He pointed at a small little shop on the corner. There was a large crack that stretched across the window. Dirt gathered around the crevices of the window, completely abandoned.

"Yeah, what about it?" I asked.

"That," my dad said. "Used to be a comic store that your uncle Christian and I would go to. There was this weird dude who used to work there. His name was Craig. Your uncle Christian and I would walk in, and Craig would say, 'how's it going fellas?'"

I let out a laugh, as my dad imitated Craig in a nasally voice.

As we continued driving down the winding West Virginia roads, we drove down another road. This one more abandoned than the last. The street was empty, except for the usual "townie" strolling casually, a beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other.

"Right there," my dad said, pointing at another building. "Was where my friend's band, Mr. Pants, used to play shows in high school."

This building was a taller and a little wider brick building that the previous owner had painted black. Just

by looking at the outside, I could imagine how desolate the inside looked. The door was boarded up, along with the windows. Just another abandoned and forgotten building.

My dad continued driving on the cobblestone road that slowly turned into paved roads decorated with potholes. We headed upwards on a hill where the road continued to stay narrow. Houses sat no more than three feet from the road. The houses in town were as rundown as the abandoned buildings we drove past.

“So, look on your right, at that blue house,” my dad said.

I looked out my window and there it was. A big blue house with white trim, that sat at the side of the road. The porch was caving in and the paint slowly peeling away. A giant banner hung on the side of the house that read, FOR RENT, which I had come to realize that was a common theme in Morgantown.

Who the hell would rent that shithole, I thought to myself. It looked unlivable. Just walking onto the porch seemed like you were asking for a death wish.

“What about it?” I asked.

My dad laughed. When he laughs before telling you a story, you know it’s a good one. “After your uncle Christian and I graduated high school, that was his first apartment. Real shithole. Your uncle threw a lot of parties there. He moved in there with a couple of our buddies from high school. Before I left for college, Christian threw me a party.”

I raised my eyebrow. I had a hard time believing those two, who collected limited edition comic books as a hobby, would be such party animals. “Oh yeah?”

He continues. “Yeah. You can’t see it from here but there’s a deck in the back of the house. So, we were all hanging out in back, and Peter, was hanging out on the deck. Suddenly the deck just collapses. Peter falls along with it, and crashes onto the ground.”

“Jesus Christ,” I let out a little laugh.

“We all crowd around Peter in back and we just hear him yell, ‘I’m alright!’” My dad laughs reminiscing.

These were stories about my dad and uncle that I had never heard before. My uncle Christian, who is really my pseudo uncle, is my dad’s best friend. I know they were friends since high school, but Dad never told me any of the hijinks they got up to. Dad had told me before I was born the two of them would write comic books together, which I was aware of. But, all of these hijinks were new to me.

“Where are we?” I asked, studying the handful of other rundown houses.

“Sunnyside,” my dad replied. “This is the ghetto of Morgantown. All though now, essentially all of Morgantown is kind of all the ghetto. It’s a lot of student housing and other shitty apartments.”

My dad continued driving through the hilly mountains. It was sad, seeing all these houses that seemed to be forgotten about. I couldn’t imagine what it looked like when my dad was growing up. Or if it even looked different.

“Where are we going?” I asked.

“It’s a surprise,” he said.

He took us down another winding road, the trees started to clear. A smile grew on my dad’s face. He pulled us into a parking lot of a shack looking building. The exhaust from the passing cars stained the side of the

sloppily built shack. I looked up at the sign that was close to disintegrating that read Mario's Fishbowl. My dad turned off the car. Following his lead, I cautiously got out of the car and followed him into the dive bar.

"I used to come here after school with your uncle. We would order lunch and do our homework at one of the booths," my dad said.

The walls were covered in little notes written by customers. I watched Dad, inspecting the wall, squinting carefully before finding us a spot. It was like they hadn't remodeled in years. These booths could've been the originals.

"You know right after you were born, your mom and I went here together," he said.

Dad never talked about mom before the divorce. We never really talked about mom in general either. If he mentioned anything relating to mom, it was surprising. He never asked me about how I felt after the divorce. We just continued with the same old conversations. He would pick me up, ask me how the weekend with mom was, I would say good, and we would move on. He tried hard not to talk badly about her around me. But he also never really talked about the good in their relationship either.

"Really?" I asked.

"Yeah," he said. "And we left one of these on the wall."

Dad pointed at the decorated wall of disintegrating paper previous restaurant goers had left over the years. There are signs from all over the country, some even dating back to the 80s. But then, I squinted my eyes to look at what he was pointing at. My heart dropped.

It was written in my dad's handwriting.

Evan and Kara came all the way from Pittsburgh just to come back and have a fishbowl! 20 years, 4 months 'till Molly's first fishbowl! 3.10.01

My dad waited twenty-one years to show me this.

"Happy Birthday, kiddo."

My dad might've not been sentimental while I was growing up, but he was sentimental when it mattered.

I Don't Even Know Who You Are

by Zach Murphy

When I booted up my computer and opened the web browser, the last thing I expected to see was a Facebook friend request from my estranged father. It's been 13 years since I rubbed my eyes and witnessed him dash out of my life, his silhouette sneaking across the streetlights and into the backseat of a yellow taxi. It's wild how such a blur of a moment can be so vivid in my memory.

Honestly, what is he trying to accomplish here? A friend request. That's rich. Is he attempting to make nice? Does he actually think that would work? I'm not holding a door open for half-hearted apologies and pitiful rivers of regrets. Or does he even have regrets?

Does he ever think about me? Well, I guess he had to be curious enough to search for me in the first place. So, maybe he does think about me. Does he want something from me? Is he checking in on me? Wondering what state I'm in? How my life has transpired? Is he trying to see which college I got accepted into but can't afford?

What if I click "accept"? Could this turn into one of those rare, happy stories with a Hallmark ending? We'll be out to lunch, eating a burger, laughing as ketchup drips onto our t-shirts at the same time, maybe even catch up while catching a baseball game?

Probably not. Let's do some investigating.

His profile is private. Become of course it is. It doesn't even show his location. But, wait. Maybe I could accept the friend request, take a quick look around at his page, and then unfriend him. No, because he'll still get the notification. Do I even want to know what he has going on? Did he flee the country? Could I run into him on the street one day? Do I have any half-siblings roaming around in the world?

Goddamnit. I look like him. As much as I'd like to deny any speck of a resemblance. I see it. The intense eyebrows, the shape of the nose, even the patchy way our mustaches grow.

My sweaty palm sits atop the computer mouse and the cursor hovers over the area, waiting for a command. I'm shaking. I look at the smiley frog pencil holder on the desk, as if it has some wisdom to offer up. You can't click halfway. You either click or you don't. I know this isn't a nuclear situation, but I'm afraid of the fallout.

My mom walks into the room and glances at the computer screen.

"Who is that?" she asks.

I click "decline" and exit out of the window.

"Just a spambot," I say.

The Chaplain

by Jonathan Hiatt

The hospital chaplain did not want to impose upon my dying father. After all, “Dad” wasn’t the religious type, he liked his Smirnoff and lemonade, liked to be right and have his way, not much of a filter at seventy-four and after all, we didn’t want to upset him. So, we respected his wishes.

But when my brother Chris took out the Medal of Our Lady of Grace, fastened it around my father’s right wrist, made the sign of the cross and prayed, I’m certain I saw in Dad’s eyes a glimmer of hope, however faint that he would enter the kingdom of Heaven as I stood at his bedside.

I’d like to think my father knew where he was heading, even without a road map made up of rubrics and dogma. I’m not sure he expected to find himself in the company of saints, but mercy triumphs over judgment.

And so, I clutched his hand with the Miraculous Medal while my older sister placed a stethoscope over his heart and I said “Godspeed, Dad! I love you” and looked into his eyes before he closed his and breathed his last.

What Do I Wear to My Friends Funeral

by Zach Murphy

I didn't reply to Jacob's last text message to me, but I did show up to his funeral. I'd spent the entire morning deciding what to wear. A lot of the clothes that I once wore don't quite fit me the way they used to in high school.

Is wearing black to a funeral mandatory? If funerals are truly meant to be a celebration of life, why can't people wear something bright? I thought about wearing my orange polo, but I was worried I'd stand out too much. Maybe the key is to wear something somewhere in-between. So I went with gray.

A funeral is just a little bit different from a high school reunion. At high school reunions, you get to see who potentially has their life together and who doesn't. At funerals, you get to see who shows up at all. I don't see anyone from high school here.

I blend in at the burial ceremony. A putrid stench wafts off of the marshy pond in the background of the cemetery. People pretend not to notice. But the more that people pretend not to notice something, the more you notice them pretending not to notice something. This is when I realize that sunglasses weren't invented to keep the sun out of your eyes. They were invented to wear at funerals. A split second of eye contact can send you into a dizzying spiral.

I watch Jacob's mother go through three entire boxes of tissues. Jacob's stepfather, who used to step all over him, half-heartedly attempts to comfort her. He rolls his eyes. I can't help but grind my teeth. Jacob was a bit strange. And even a little irksome sometimes. But maybe Jacob just wanted some company. Maybe he wanted an ever-so-brief escape from his home. I regret the time he knocked on my door and I told my mom to tell him I wasn't home. I regret the time I didn't invite him to my birthday get-together. It's amazing how get-togethers can actually push people apart. I really wish I would have answered that last text message, even if it was about a movie I had no intention of ever seeing.

My grinding teeth come to a halt, like a train stopping when the conductor sees a problem on the tracks. I duck out of the burial and head to my rusted Suburu. I break down inside of the car that has its own breakdowns.

Someday, our bones, our brains, and our hearts won't feel a thing. But right now I need to go home and change.

HERE COMES THE SUN
by Eric Suchy



IT HAPPENED LAST WEEK

by Alexander Feia

Last week I'm going to complete IOP
Which stands for Intensive Outpatient
Which is a type of group therapy you go through When you have a problem with substance
abuse and you want to stop
It's going to be bittersweet and a little destabilizing as I walk out of that group

But I'm going to make it through that alright

I know that.
Because it happened last week.

Last summer I'm gonna relapse
Last June I'm gonna lose my job
Last year the relationships in my life are all gonna become horribly strained
(especially the one with myself)
Two years ago a virus is gonna take away my livelihood

Three years ago I'm gonna go back to college Seven years ago I'm gonna drop out of college

Eight years ago I'm gonna graduate high school
Twelve years ago I'm gonna do two quick inhales and feel okay for the very first time

Thirteen years ago my mom's gonna spend the summer weeping Fourteen years ago my dad's
gonna break her heart.

But I'm gonna make it through that alright And I'm gonna complete IOP.

I know that.
Because it happened last week.

Savings

by Spencer Vik

“Hello, this is the Eon Entertainment Backstage Exclusive Secret VIP Rewards Program customer service line, how may I help you today?” This is where Carlos worked. He shared this room of the office building with two coworkers and The Manager. This space, designated for customer service regarding the Eon Entertainment Backstage Exclusive Secret VIP Rewards Program, was about the size of your average conference room. But with cubicles in three of its corners, it seemed much smaller. The Manager of this operation got his own office inside the room. His door was always closed unless he was storming out for a cigarette or to yell at someone.

“Hi, I was wondering if I could cancel my... membership, or whatever?”

“Oh, I am so very sorry to hear this. We apologize for any inconvenience. May I ask why you have decided to opt out of such amazing savings?”

“Honestly, I didn’t even know I was signed up until I got this random e-mail. A cashier must’ve reeled me in the last time I was there, and then I forgot. But I don’t really need it, so if you could just take me off, I’d appreciate it.”

“Okay, well, what is your name, miss?”

“Miranda.”

“And last?”

“Halverson.”

“Alverson?”

“Halverson, with an ‘h.’”

“Haverson?”

“Halverson!”

“Okay, I see.”

Carlos looked her up in the system.

“Okay, Miranda, it says here you are still on the trial run of our program. You are only a week into the month that we give you. Why don’t we keep your subscription active until you make a decision? That way you’ll still have some time to make use of these super savings.”

“I mean, I don’t need the trial run. Like I said, the cashier just kind of... did it. Could you just, take me off the list, or whatever you have to do?”

“Miranda, did you know the Eon Entertainment Backstage Exclusive Secret VIP Rewards Program offers VIP discounts on many fine retailers and restaurants, such as Portman’s department store and Famous John’s Barbecue?”

“No, I didn’t, but I’m not interested- “

“All you have to do is sign up for our app, which is available free to all Eon Entertainment Backstage Exclusive Secret VIP Rewards Program members. And this includes those still on their trial run, such as yourself. Non-members have to pay for the app.”

“Okay, but- “

“For just twenty-four ninety-nine a month, you will have access to all this, in addition to spectacular Eon

Entertainment deals: ten percent off DVDs, up to fifteen percent off large electronics. Plus, after two months of membership – meaning, two months in addition to your trial run – you get a free fifteen-dollar Eon Entertainment gift card. Miranda, are you sure you don't want to take advantage of this amazing opportunity?"

"Yes, I'm sure. Please just cancel it."

"Okay, I respect your decision. We will keep your subscription active until the trial run expires, and then we will cancel it. That gives you a little window for some savings."

"Excuse me? No, that's not what I asked you to do. I don't want to call here again. I called today to cancel this shit, and I'm not hanging up until it's done."

"Okay, miss, I respect your decision. I have deleted your account. Have a blessed day."

"Bye."

Carlos sighed and looked out the window. He stretched out his back in his chair. Then he stretched his arms out and yawned. He decided to get up for some more coffee. But as he rose and turned, he found The Manager looming before him; square, towering shoulders and overwhelming menthol breath.

"Come with me," said The Manager, beckoning with his pointer finger.

Carlos looked around sheepishly, but there was hardly anywhere to look, and his one coworker present was busy on a call. He followed The Manager into his office, head hung low. The metal door shut loudly behind them.

The Manager's office was suffocatingly small, and yet there was a second door on the other side. Standing behind his desk, The Manager held out his finger, pointing at it. This door had no window – only a small, rectangular slit near the bottom, that a little silver knob just above the floor slid open.

"You know what to do," said The Manager, still pointing.

Carlos sighed and slowly opened the strange door. He walked into the room's total darkness and closed the door on himself. The Manager locked it.

"Since this is your third failure, that's six days, Carlos!" The Manager shouted from the other side. "Should be plenty of time for some self-improvement!"

The Manager then left his office. One of the other two employees entered the room, back from their lunch.

"Where's Carlos?" they asked The Manager.

"In the hole."

"Again?"

"Yep. Let that be a lesson to the rest of you."

The Manager left for a smoke. When he returned, both his two free employees were on calls. The Manager noticed, much more than he normally would, Carlos's empty cubicle. The phone there was ringing off the hook. He wondered if it might be better for business to just let it ring.



Vergil, Cali, and Luna

Portraits by Hana Yonekawa

THE DIFFERENCE IN SUGAR AND HONEY

by Tim Knight

You are adrift in a sea. A sea of black hair, much like your own; on the city sidewalk in Incheon, South Korea. But there is something off. Something in the way you move, talk, tense your arm when you reach for the street counter kimbap. They see it etched into your face. Some unexplained difference.

“Two thousand Won.” Says the kind Korean food vendor.

You hand the street vendor your two thousand Won, thank her, and wave goodbye. She smiles as you shuffle forward.

In the distance, the translator spots the small two-story building, nestled in a corner alley, beneath a nest of electrical cables. The building holds no apparent signage, only a blank marquee sign. A single autumn tree drops down its withering leaves onto the surrounding sidewalk.

“There is the adoption center. She should be in there.”

—
You grasp the metal handle. How heavy it feels as you pull the door open. Scanning the space, you see her at a small lone table near the kitchenette in the back. She is still far off, but like a landmark, you know it is her. As you approach, the translator in your wake, you see her muddy brown eyes, her permed ajumma hair a nest of black and grey. You can tell, she too is nervous, and it comforts you, to know she feels the same.

There is a kindness in her face, a faint connection, like you knew each other in another life.

All that vibrates out from your stilted throat is a quiet “Hello,”

She stops pacing the table, and in a flutter of an eye, she unfolds her arms and brings them stiff to her sides. She looks at you. After scanning your face, she steps forward, then hugs you tight—like you have never left.

In her embrace, a strange occurrence: Her hair reminds you of your adopted mothers, so long ago, when she and you painted away countless afternoons in the family room.

She starts to say something over and over in your ear as you sway together.

You look at the translator. She points to Mrs. Lee, then makes a heart with her hands, then points at me.

After we have taken our seats, the translator sets down a video recorder and begins to record.

Translator: October 4, 2042

There is a long pause as we all hold our tongues and study each other.

Mrs. Lee: (Korean)

Mrs. Lee reaches down and presents a wooden box.

Translator: She says, she has a gift. It is for you.

You slide the top of the box off. As you do, the effervescence of apple bewitches your nostrils, but there is something off—different in its smell. Like the difference in the sweetness of sugar and honey.

T.K: (English)

Translator: Your son says that he also has a present for you.

You reach for your backpack, pulling out a package wrapped in old blue and red Christmas paper. Her nose twitches and you wonder if she smells the same thing.

T.K: (English)

Translator: He says that in Minnesota, his mother, was one of the first to sell this variety of apple.

You grab a paper plate and a knife from the kitchenette. Then, return to the table and begin to slice the two varieties of apple.

T.K: (English)

Translator: In fact, she even saved it. At first, this variety was thought to be a failure, the seeds did not take root, but one day at her job as a seamstress, she met one of the researchers at the University of Minnesota. The man and his research team had a new variety of apple tree, but in all their efforts could not get the seeds to sprout.

T.K: (English)

Translator: His mother pleaded with them, let me try it in my plot in the arboretum. The man and his team said no, but she was so persistent—they eventually agreed—they had no choice. Now it flourishes throughout the United States and even the world.

Mrs. Lee picks up the apple slice and studies its grain. She takes the apple piece on her tongue—languishing the taste.

Mrs. Lee: (Korean)

Translator: She says, it is lovely, but different from what she is use to.

Mrs. Lee slides the paper plate over to you, motioning you to try her apple. You study it in the same intrinsic way she does, then you put the slice into your mouth.

T.K: (English)

The translator nods.

Translator: Yes, the same, but different.

Mrs. Lee smiles, and you smile back. A long pause enters the room. You hear the laughter and sobs of other families. Turning around, you see, life's uncertainties unfold. A girl in her twenties sits by herself at the corner table for four. She shivers like the cold is all she has ever known. A man in his sixties begins to sob in a circle

of bodies all pressing their hands onto his arched back. The sobs have no sign of remission, as he has searched for many winding years, drank himself dizzy from the weight of it all, and now, all in this moment—he is consumed fully—finally finding the true essence of home.

You turn back around to face Mrs. Lee. There is so much you know we each want and perhaps need to say to each other, but the words are lodged in our throats. Perhaps there is no way to say them.

Mrs. Lee is the first to break the silence. She does not do it with words, but with a pen she takes from her pocket. She begins to draw on the paper plate. You and the translator watch as the plate soaked in the mixture of apple begins to run with black.

After she finishes, you notice her swollen eyes. She pushes the plate across the table, so you can see what she has made. The running of the ink has exemplified her drawing. Your eyes well, and you see so clearly who she remembers.

Mrs. Lee: (Korean)

Translator: It is you, as a child.

You look at the drawing, the inky grain of rice you once were, your Korean chipmunk cheeks pressing into the heart of a rough sketched frame she has not had time to shade, but you recognize in an instant as her.

Mrs. Lee: (Korean)

Translator: Mrs. Lee wants to know if you draw.

You are silent while you think of the time when each weekend, like religion, you would congregate with your adopted mother into the family room and sketch lilacs, listening to the sound of color press into your canvasses. Our time soothing by—until she opened her eyes for the last time on her deathbed—to smile for us—to say in her final motion on this earth—that we mean so much to her. Then she shut her eyes and smiled no more.

After she passed, each time you put pen to paper, paint to canvas, charcoal to wood, you would remember their timbre, their distinct sound—what could no longer be—from your childhood family room and the world. Gone with her was that indistinct something that once fruited so easily. Now all was different—more dreary, like rain was always a moment away. The summer sun heating in carpeted lines through a Sunday's afternoon curtains, that feeling of unobjective warmth—fleeting off into nothing—like a post-Christmas exhale.

Even the things you could not remember, somehow you knew, that after her death, that part of the world too has surrendered with her. Even in you, some intangible part inside of you, even if you did not realize it in the moment, was whispered off with her. So, you quit your art classes, skipped pottery, and vowed never to draw again. That part of you once mountainous, now lay crumbled as sharpened granules of sand—you would not, or perhaps could not walk through her splinters. So, after her death, you did not draw again.

T.K: (English)

Translator: He says—he used to.

Mrs. Lee places her hand on yours and holds it tight.

Mrs. Lee: (Korean)

Translator: Mrs. Lee says that she has always dreamed of this moment. But when she dreams of it you are still that sweet baby boy. And now things are different. She is not sure if that dream is a dream, or if this instance is.

You squeeze back against her withered fingers. She looks so tired.

T.K: (English)

Translator: He understands.

The three of us talk for another hour, before saying our formal goodbyes. You promise to see each other again one day, but as the words exit our mouths, they project out feint, like a call from a dream.

On the way back to Minnesota, during your flight, an autumn flood pours out its sorrow through the airplane window. The plane dances in the air, unable to rest, until the rain finally stops at 6am.

As dawn begins to rise, a compulsion enters your consciousness. You turn off the highway and B-line towards the Arboretum. You descend the terraced hill and make it to the core of apple tree shoreline—your mother's plot. The flood has washed away the topsoil, exposing the gnarled roots of the apple trees like Coastal Korean mangroves. Out in the shallows of the pond, wild rice waves in the wind, growing strong like apple saplings.

A peace overtakes you. Your shoes, and socks are flung from your feet, and soon you are bare. You dive into the waters, which should be cool from the autumn winds, but you feel warm under the blue sky. Only one small cloud twinkles down in a sun shower—so far away.

You close your eyes and feel the cleansing of its rain.



Larger than Life
by Sandy Talbott

Andy's Good Luck Charm

by Louise Reed

When Andy asked me to come to this concert, I had no idea what to expect. I looked around and I was clearly overdressed in my little black dress and leather jacket. Even my bright-colored Vans seemed out of place in the grungy bar. Everyone else in the bar waiting for the band to start seemed to be stuck in the 90s. The rest of the crowd matched with Andy: distressed jeans and band t-shirts they haven't changed in at least two decades. The venue—if you can even call it that, is a small hole-in-wall bar down a slightly run down street, blocks away from Andy's apartment. It was Andy's go-to for shows. I had walked past this street several times, and somehow missed this place.

I made my way into the bar to meet Andy. Lined up outside the bar stood a gaggle of punks, their arms decorated in tattoos they'd been collecting for decades. Inside the bar, a thick cloud of smoke hovered in the air. I was unsure if it was from cigarettes or the fog machine that sat by the stage. The only light that illuminated the bar was the neon signs throughout the bar. The colors yellow and green reflected on bar patrons' glasses. The stage was a fraction of the size of stages I've seen before. It was hard to even fathom the idea of people with several instruments being able to play comfortably on that stage.

"Nora!" Andy waved to me in the distance. He popped his head over the crowd, towering over the bar patrons'. His smile was almost brighter than the neon signs. "You made it!" I forced a small smile. He pushed himself through the crowd, making his way towards me.

"Interesting choice of venue," I said.

"What? Too grungy for you, princess?" Andy smiled.

My eyes rolled, almost far enough to get stuck behind my head. "No, it's just... different."

His arm wrapped around my shoulders. "Open your horizons, kid."

He scanned the bar, looking for the perfect seat. I saw it in his eyes; the ah-ha moment. Andy grabbed my wrist, dragging me to a faraway corner. The two of us found a high table that hugged the wall, just far enough from the stage where we could sit and wait for the show to start. Andy slammed two large pints of beer on the table and flashed me a smile, his yellow teeth the shade of lager. The pints glowed like lightbulbs.

"I got you a drink," Andy said.

"Thank you," I replied.

Andy drank his beer like a kid would a box of apple juice. I lifted the glass, smelling the beer, trying not to curl my nose.

Andy laughed at me. "It's not poisonous."

I looked back down at the beer. I never drank. And if I did, it would never be beer. Even when I did drink, I would maybe, drink one seltzer with a group of friends. I never willingly drank alcohol like most people my age. Even during my rebellious teenage years, I didn't even drink, unlike my school counterparts.

Trusting Andy, I lifted the glass, my lips hitting the rim of the glass. The foam hit my lips, making a mustache as I took my first sip of the bitter yet smooth booze, trying my best to not spit it back up. Andy had already finished his first glass before I could even finish my first sip.

“I’m assuming you don’t drink,” Andy chuckled.

“No,” I replied. “Not particularly.”

“Just try it,” he laughed.

I nodded, forcing the rest of the sip down. Andy smiled at me with admiration. Like he was watching his kid go off to college. But instead, he was watching his very sober friend trying beer for the first time. I slide the rest of my glass across the table, letting him drink the rest, which he gladly took.

“That tastes like piss,” I told him. “I don’t know how you drink it.”

He just shrugged his shoulders, “Years of practice, kid.”

I watched him chug the rest of the pint, beer foam sticking to his stubble of a beard. I watched as droplets of his beer, fell into the collar of his ratty shirt. He wiped it away with one of sleeves. I watched as he slammed the second empty pint onto the small tabletop. If they gave out awards for speed drinkers, then Andy would win the world record.

“Do you want anything else?” Andy asked.

I nodded. “Just a water.”

He nodded, waving at the waitress. “Can I get a water?”

The waitress just nodded back at him, shoveling ice into a water cup. Filling it up to the brim, the waitress walked to our table like a carnie who walked on tightrope while carrying our drinks.

“So, I forgot to tell you,” He said in good ol’ Andy fashion, finishing off the last sip of his beer. “You might be my good luck charm. After every time we hang out, I get laid.”

“Awesome?” I left out a laugh, unsure how to respond.

Andy smiled proudly, like a middle schooler who just won the school science fair. “Two days after that other concert, I hooked up my buddy’s ex-wife.”

“So, what you’re saying is that I’m your wing woman?”

Andy raised an eyebrow, letting out a small little chuckle before he said, “Well, more like a spiritual wing woman, but yes.”

A small brunette passed our table, taking a seat at the table across from us. Hair nicely done, curvy in the right places; overall perfect. Andy’s eyes inspected them like the TSA inspects suspicious bags.

He nodded upwards to them, signaling me to look over to their table. “What do you think their story is, huh?”

I smirked, ignoring his question, and letting my eyes wander around the small bar. I was seeing Andy in his element. In a space he was most familiar with, and he fit right into the crowd. Unlike me, frankly overdressed, Andy rocked the same jeans he always wears, but this time a different band shirt. I swear the last time he bought a pair of shoes must’ve been when he was in high school.

“Are you ready?” Andy asked me.

“As ready as I’ll ever be,” I said.

The truth was I didn’t know what to expect. What makes a real punk rock concert? I had no idea. But Andy did. On top of being a punk rock connoisseur, he was also a musician. He took his music as seriously as the French take wine—very, very seriously.

Leading up to this night, we would exchange texts. I would text him, asking him for the plan and he would simply reply with: “we rock out.” No explanation points at the end. Just a period. Like it was matter of fact. Even if I didn’t know what to expect from a real punk rock concert, I knew that the plan for the night was to rock out.

In a matter of time, the band crawled onto the small stage. Four men donned in shaggy hair, which made it hard to depict their age, made their way to their designated spots. They formed a shape of a triangle and were crunched together like a box of sardines. I was afraid the bass player would whack the lead singer with his instrument. They whipped their instruments around like cowboys with lassos.

Suddenly, Andy dragged me by my arm. He pushed us past the crowd of middle-aged dads reliving their teen years. He found a corner for us to stand next to the stage. I gripped onto the corner of Andy’s Triple Rock hoodie; afraid I would lose him in the now growing crowd.

The strums of the guitars radiated across the room. It called in the crowd the way a stop light controls traffic. The vibrations of the music reverberated inside my chest. The combination of the banging of the drums, the bass strumming, and the muffled sounds of the singer created the perfect formula. I might’ve not known any lyrics, known the origin of the band or any of the bandmate’s names, but it didn’t matter. What mattered was the sound and having Andy besides me, dancing along to the shredding of guitars.

“This is real punk rock,” Andy shouted, over the music. “Here we are: me the punk rock guru, and you, my spiritual wing woman. Just need you to work your magic.”

I only laughed at him. I watched as Andy looked around the room, making eye contact with one of the brunettes across the room. He winked at me as he disappeared into the crowd towards her.

Looks like I worked my magic.



WIRES

by Erik Suchy

SIMPLE SUBTRACTION

by Andrew Kasmarek

I have a quick math problem for you here, and don't worry it's graded¹:

So, Andrew has \$12.63,
minus \$39,758 for his student loans
minus \$3,785 for his credit card debt
minus \$710 for his rent in two weeks
minus \$674 for his wisdom tooth extraction
minus \$342 for his unpaid hospital bill from two years ago
minus \$220 for his weed every three weeks
minus \$73 for his cellphone bill
minus \$68 for his internet bill
minus \$35 for his electricity
minus \$17 for his Amazon Prime
minus \$15 for his Netflix
minus \$10 for his Spotify
minus \$4.99 for this app called Tuneln that he can't figure out how to cancel
minus whatever else he has left for food
minus the fact that he only has time to work part time at a donut shop

What does this leave Andrew with?

(Show your work):

((He doesn't exactly know))
(Free of what?)

Answer: The fact that Andrew is way proud to be an American, where at least he knows he's free.

¹ FICO Credit Scores were created in the year 1989.

Tonight, I know I am going to fall asleep

by Spencer Vik

Awake with eyes closed for so many nights,
I've memorized the backs of my eyelids.
I've had to stare past them,
deep into the folds of that illusory blackness.
I've befriended those glimmers of hidden geometry, those threads of the fractal grid stitching space and time.
They seem to surface from the murk, rising to greet me. But what if they're not moving at all?
What if the blackness is more like a cloud, a cloud in a larger sky, and what I'm seeing are these black clouds
drifting by?
And these glimmers of geometry are only revealed
through the holes in the clouds and the spaces between?
Like looking out a window of an airplane on its side
and flying to the side, across the clouds.
The window's all white, and then, a seagull.
The window's all black, and then, the threads of the grid.
The window's all white, and then, blue. The window's all black, and then, black. Beneath the fractal grid, more
black.
The question is: What is black? What makes it?
Does it have its own threads that stitch it together,
that I might see if I just stare hard enough, deep enough?
I must go another day without knowing,
for tonight, as my head hits the pillow, I can feel the pull. That extra bit of heaviness near the bottom of the cal-
varia that assures you'll soon be asleep.
Now, I'm not even looking at the blackness.
Eyes not just closed, but off.
I'm frying bigger fish in the unconscious.
So... is the blackness still there, waiting on my return? Or is it but a clever hallucination
that waits until I look its way to appear?
How can I be certain? It doesn't make a sound.
What is the black of outer space, empty space?
Is that made from the same material as what I see behind my eyelids?
Black, a goth's favorite color.
Black is what inhabits all the spaces in the grid. What is that? What am I seeing?
What magic is eternally flashing before my eyes, whether open or closed?

Author & Artist Biographies

Alexander Feia had this message for the staff: “This is a poem I wrote last Spring when I was about to graduate from Outpatient Rehab at the Pride Institute.”

Terrance Gallo left Haute Dish this message: “I am not a fan of nuclear armaments. The minute we tested and used the first atomic bomb we made ourselves vulnerable to attack. No one could reach us and do any amount of damage to the United States until the nuclear bomb. I believe nuclear power is something we do not need. We are not grown up enough to handle atomic fission.”

Jonathan Hiatt’s involvement with Haute Dish dates back to his first published piece, “The Manifesto” (Spring 2017). Jonathan graduated from Metro State in December 2020 with a B.A. in English and went on to earn certificates in editing from Edit Republic, and he was recently credited as Assistant Editor on Metro State professor Suzanne Nielsen’s poetry collection, *Face Up: A Collection of Outlaw Poems* (2022), published by Oleb Books.

Andrew Kasmarek is a creative writing major. He loves the Milwaukee Bucks, Kurt Vonnegut and the Grateful Dead.

Tim Knight is a South Korean adoptee who lives in Minnesota. He is currently enrolled at Metropolitan State University for creative writing.

Axel Keylander is a social science major at Metro State on the political science track. He has previously studied creative writing and communications and has spent much of his time in school as an advocate for student concerns in higher education policy. His writing passions include poetry, creative nonfiction, and historical fiction, and he regularly applies creative writing to his advocacy work.

Robin Locke is currently enrolled and pursuing a degree in technical communication and professional writing with a minor in creative writing at Metro State.

Zach Murphy is a graduate of Metropolitan State’s Screenwriting program. His chapbooks *Tiny Universes* (Selcouth Station Press, 2021) and *If We Keep Moving* (Ghost City Press, 2022) are available in paperback and ebook. He lives with his wonderful wife, Kelly, in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Author & Artist Biographies

Louise Reed is a senior, graduating with her bachelor's degree in the spring. She is a high school TA by day, and a writer by night. She first began writing short stories seriously her third year at Metro, and now is working on a series of short stories based on one of her best friends. She hopes one day to attend grad school and continue her love of writing in Seattle where she will reside with her partner and three cats.

Erik Suchy is a winter 2021 graduate of Metro State University's Liberal Arts program, where he earned his BA in Creative Writing. As an amateur photographer, his work has been exhibited both in-person and online at Praxis Art Gallery in Minneapolis and Las Laguna Art Gallery in Laguna Beach, California and has been featured in publications such as *Sheepshead Review*, *Cardinal Sins*, and *Shift: A Journal of Literary Oddities*. He currently works as an on-site behavior technician at Fraser in Woodbury, working one-on-one with kids with special needs and behavior disabilities.

Sandy Talbott is a senior at Metro State and will graduate in the spring of 2023. Sandy then plans on attending Adler Graduate School in Minnetonka for a degree in art therapy. Sandy has always loved creating and feels that art is great therapy.

Spencer Vik is a Creative Writing student at Metro and a Poetry Editor for the Haute Dish. As a writer and music nerd, he enjoys writing poems, short stories, and music reviews as well as rock, punk, metal, and rap songs. He'd love to write a film script one day, too. His style leans toward the surreal and features lots of dry, existential humor. Other hobbies include walking around, trying every new brewery he comes across, and excessive analysis of "the times." As a rapper, he goes by STIGMATIC (check him out on SoundCloud!).

