

## WHAT'S INSIDE

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## COMMUNITY BULLETIN

**Narragansett Bay Community Symphony Orchestra** performs Prokofiev, Chopin, & Herryman Rodriguez; tickets pay what you can. March 2, 3pm, East Greenwich High School (RI)

**Old time folk music jam** at Melissa & Kurt's place on February 21st, 6-10 pm! Bring your instrument or just come to eat soup and listen. Email Kurt or Melissa for the address (East Somerville).

**Old Time Almost Fridays (OTAF)**, a weekly night of folk music and jams, has returned to Lily P's restaurant in Cambridge, every Thursday from 7pm onwards.

**Uilleann piper Caoimhín Ó Fearghail** will be playing a concert at 8pm on Saturday, March 22, at the Canadian American Club in Watertown.

**Great Carrington Bake Off**, Scone week, every week, all welcome (Providence, RI)

## LEDOR FROM THE EDITTER

IT'S A MONTH OF MOSTS AT THE MYSTIC MONEYMAKER: most poems, most games, most heavily-saturated cover. This bounty of poetry, painting and puzzles is especially delightful because, frankly? in those long dark pre-submission winter nights? I'll admit to a moment or two of insecurity about the theme **Vulture & Phoenix**. Was Phoenix too close to last month's Soot? was the avian specificity too much of a constraint? was it just too bizarre?

Those misgivings were misplaced: there's no bizarre too bizarre for this super-talented & multinational community of generous artists. We loved the way this month's submissions so elegantly complement the format, like a vine on a trellis: full-color paintings that "pop" in black & white [6, 9, 21]; poetry that dances all over the page [4, 14]; trompe l'oeil textured-paper pieces [5, 10]; and a massive puzzles section that will show you how DIVINE a No. 2 pencil feels on this paper.

Speaking of diversions in a world that sometimes needs them: one of our explicit goals here is to build a creative community independent of, oh, I don't know, anyone who attended an inauguration ball last month. So: when you're done with your copy: would you mind passing it on to someone you love? Or point them to the online archive: [aliza.art/mystic-moneymaker](http://aliza.art/mystic-moneymaker). We're, like, eighty percent sure there's a world beyond social media - help us prove it.

As always, you can subscribe at [mystic-moneymaker.beehiiv.com](http://mystic-moneymaker.beehiiv.com). Free subs keep you abreast of submission deadlines, release dates & launch parties; paid ones put future issues in your mailbox (and help keep this thing going).

Even better: send us your art! Next month's theme is **Swamp and Spark**: give me greenery, give me neon. Submissions are due by the **full moon on Mar 14** at [bit.ly/iammystic](http://bit.ly/iammystic)

*"Always be around." John Cage*



## RETROSPECT VINTAGE: TREASURE TROVE ON MASS AVE

MAYBE YOUR FIRST VISIT to Retrospect Vintage was on-purpose, but if you're anything like us, Retrospect yanked you off the street. Something in the window—a one-of-a-kind dress, a stained-glass lampshade, an emerald handbag with a golden bee clasp—caught your eye, and before you knew it, you were half an hour late for wherever you were going. If I'm wrong—if you haven't been yet—then what are you waiting for?

**Zigs & zags:** You might know Retrospect's previous, cozier digs near Central. The store's original focus was Tanya's up-cycled and repainted furniture, but an on-foot location next to a university didn't move a lot of antique cabinetry. One day, Tanya brought in a rack of her own clothes; a week later, the rack was empty.

**One door closes:** Retrospect's new home is the former brick-and-mortar home of Cambridge's Door Store, which still operates out of the basement. As an homage, DOOR STORE letters are hidden in the RETROSPECT signage, and wooden-door chandeliers hang from the ceiling.

**Watch this:** When Dan joined his mother at the shop, watches were what really drew him in. "There's so much story in watches, the way they move from hand to hand." A year or so later, the store boasts an extensive collection (including rarities from nearby Waltham Watches). Dan has since taught himself to repair and revive the watches, which, yes, improves resale prospects, but also keeps the story going.



Retrospect lives about halfway between Harvard and Central Square. Mother & son Tanya & Dan Iordanov run a shop of unlikely balances: varied & surprising yet somehow cohesive; filled to the brim yet not crowded or cluttered; welcoming and personal but never overbearing. Just as the stylish, uncommon and eccentric selection reflects their idiosyncratic tastes ("Our house basically looks just like this," Dan quips), the cool-but-not-exclusive vibe reflects their family philosophy. "We're huge givers," Dan says. "We love when people leave happy."



**"We want people to come in and have a good time."** Visitors are encouraged to hang out whether or not they're buying something. Stop by with some friends and play a game on one of the best-maintained free tables on this side of the Charles. You can even pick out a song on the vintage jukebox: "ninety percent my music," Dan says, and ten percent popular request.



**Lotus lamps:** Retrospect boasts a massive collection of stained-glass Turkish table lamps, as well as an iconic vintage lotus lamp (\$700). A previous gold lotus lamp had essentially been for show - the price tag, while fair, seemed almost discouragingly high - but before the shop had even officially opened, a passerby spotted it in the window and asked to buy it. It "felt like a good omen", so after that first lamp sold, they sourced a replacement.

**Name-your-price:** Retrospect loves to barter, and almost everything in the shop is negotiable. Interactions can be hit-or-miss - augmented reality & AI photo-harvesting can make this a "race to the bottom" against the Internet's prices - but even so, Dan loves the conversation that comes from a good old-fashioned haggle. There's even a "name-your-price" section next to the pool table.



*Retrospect Vintage is at 940 Massachusetts Ave and open 12pm-9pm every day.*

I've stricken matches  
 all my life  
 into the darkness  
 I have flung them,  
 a brief certainty,  
 and wistfully watched them  
 like coins  
 for a fountain fall  
 and shadow,  
                     take them

as rust  
 is a slow flame of water  
 so have I kindled  
 the quiet fire of time,  
 dust, dust all over  
 these hands and face  
 and feet and eyes!  
 dust, as far as the...

eye... aye,  
 of course, now, now I see!  
 begone dusty death  
 and suffocating sleep  
 for it is not the world  
 that must burn

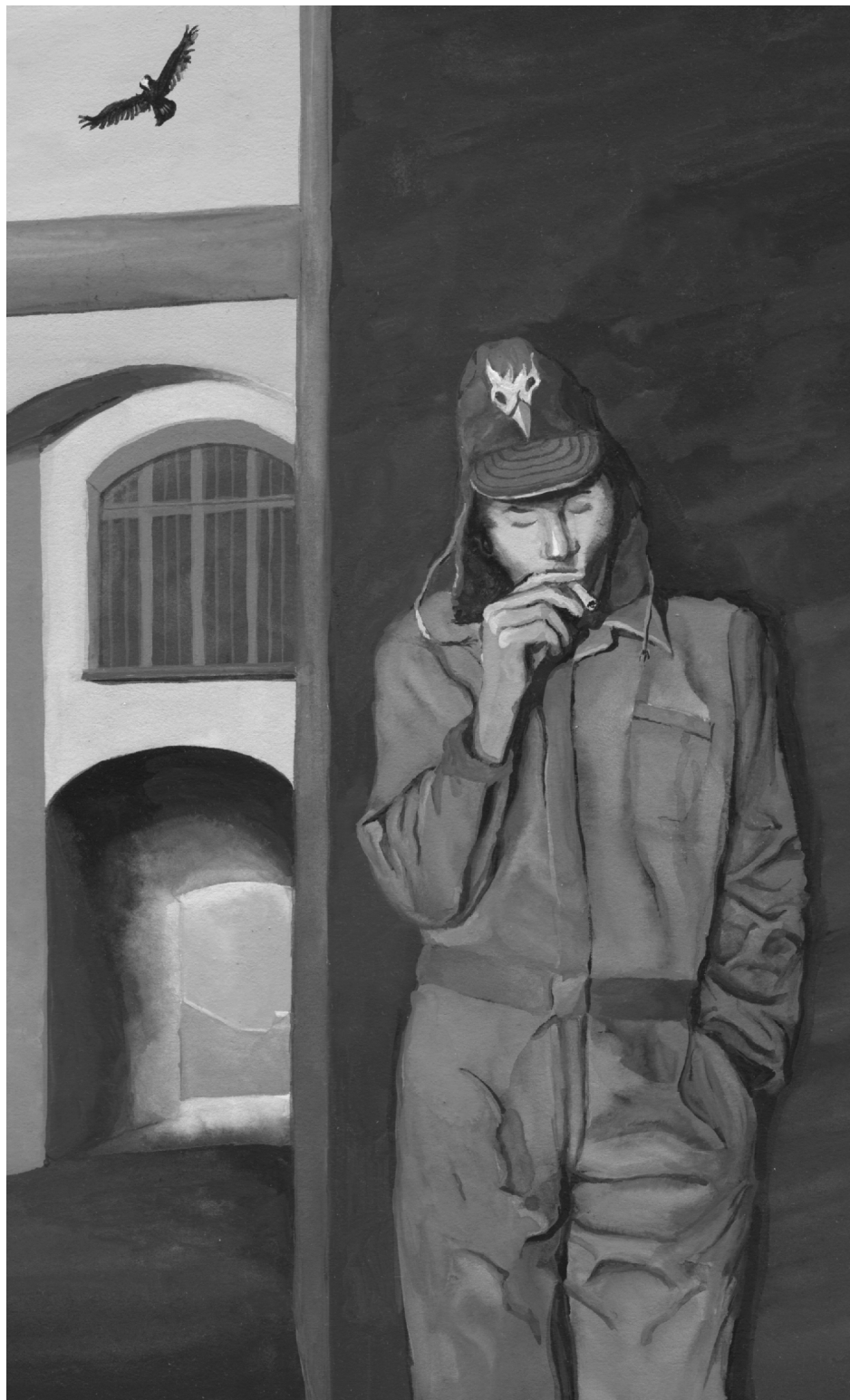
but me

a smile raises a cheek  
 that is a stranger to tears  
 yet a brook, a creek  
 lilts down its dome  
 and the two  
                     meet

ALIGHT! brief candle,  
 take whatever is driftwood,  
 hollow and spent,  
 and guide it back  
 to its ashen home  
 alight, life-long friend  
 I will see you  
 when this winter  
 shall end







6 THE WAITING GAME by Will Reber - gouache watercolor on paper

**Note to Self**

My boy, I'm the only one that knows, that you're  
far out at sea

I see you, there: grip on the rail, eyes on the horizon,  
struggling to rig a sail

I promise, even if you catch the softest breeze,  
I will find you, and  
guide those tears from your cheeks

My love for you is as real as the passion in your soul  
for the songs you sing to me

The last time a great dying came  
Nothing survived but lystrosaurus  
But lystrosaurus did remain

A lizard-pig who burrowed under burning rain  
And crawled out into a land gone gray and porous  
The last time a great dying came

Alone on earth, he munched his way across the plain  
Living on ferns where once was forest  
But lystrosaurus did remain

And for 5 million years he held his claim  
Fern-to-body fern-to-body ouroboros  
The last time a great dying came

We huddle close, we sit around the flame  
We talk about what's coming and what came before us  
We huddle close, that we, like lystrosaurus, might remain

As we cast about for who to blame  
What we were given and what's not meant for us  
Think of the last time a great dying came  
When lystrosaurus did remain

*listen to this villanelle in song form:*







# Outs & Ins

*for 2025*

## OUT

True Crime  
Outs & Ins Lists  
Tech Bros  
Gods  
Masters  
Getting our bones  
picked clean

## IN

Shoplifting  
Manifestos  
Queer Hackers  
Dogs  
Masturbating  
Rising from the  
flames

DON'T  
LET  
FASCISTS



BURN  
US TO  
ASHES.



GOT A SPINE? USE IT.

CUT OUT AND SEND TO YOUR LEGISLATOR

(OR GIVE THEM A CALL - REGULARLY)

## MESSAGES FROM THE MAJOR ARCANA

THIS MONTH, SPIRIT WAS BUSY. The universe got into disarray, and all the Zodiac signs have been trying to get their Houses back in order, sending the vultures out to find the scraps of energy that got scattered. In response, the Major Arcana (Tarot's guardians of the soul's journey through life), opened their doors to all who seek them, no matter your star sign. When I tried to talk to Spirit, six Arcana reached out to leave messages here, knowing someone in their charge would read it.

Which chapter of the soul's journey are you experiencing now? Your guardian may have a message for you. Arcana are listed in the order they were revealed. In the spirit of the phoenix, each message is charmed with something that must be destroyed in order to reach its true potential.

by Eve Starlantern  
Mystic Treehouse #6  
somewhere in the valley, 02452

### THE HIGH PRIESTESS *to those who seek clarity and inner wisdom:*

You can argue both sides of the story, but that doesn't mean that both sides are equally good. Stop for a moment. Be still, slow down your data-driven drum rolls of potential doom, and breathe your way down below the buzzing into the quiet lake at the center of your mind, where your inner child and conscience go fishing. You already have all the wisdom that you need. Your intuition – that quiet, confident nudge that something is both good and right – will guide you. Trust your inner wisdom.

Charm to destroy: Orange or Lemon

### THE MAGICIAN *to those who dream:*

What is it that you're seeking? What is it that you really want? Close your eyes and imagine it. Imagine yourself holding it in your hands. What does it look like? Is it heavy, fluffy, fragrant? Does it fit in your car? Does it change who you are? Imagine telling your friends about this wonderful thing in the past tense. Tell yourself all the details of that story. Visualize your success, and you're one step further. Visualize how to get there, and you can start walking.

Charm to destroy: Sunflower Seeds

### THE SUN *to those who have too much to do today:*

Hello there. I'll keep this brief, for I am also on a tight schedule in Winter. The days are just so short, aren't they? Where does the time go? Anyway, friend, it's good to see you, even for a moment. Your life is so full. You have so many wonderful people around you – people who look to you for your knowledge and judgment, people who love you and worry about you, people who just love the weirdo that you are. You don't have to do it all, but you are lucky to have so many flowers in your garden. Take a moment – smell the roses, even in winter.

Charm to destroy: Egg (vegan: avocado)



## WHEEL OF FORTUNE

*to those going through a change:*

The thing about big changes is that they happen twice – first slowly, then fast. First, the seed sprouts beneath the soil: you take little steps toward the future, and some days it feels like nothing is happening, or even like you're going backwards. Then, one day, the tree bears fruit. Suddenly, you're a new person. You can feel it: the ground is moving beneath you, and the future is approaching – it's real. Don't panic. You've got this. The thing about big changes is that you've been preparing for them for a long time. You're ready.

Charm to destroy: Pistachio



## THE WORLD *to those who are coming full circle:*

Do you remember when you sat there, a long time ago, and all of this was just an idea in your head? Perhaps the Magician asked you to visualize your success, to "imagine holding it in your hands," as he likes to say. Do you remember what you imagined? Reality is so different, so much more complex and messy, and yet so much deeper and more genuine. The beautiful part of coming full circle is that it's not an ending. You are discovering who you are, because you have a lot left to do. The world is your oyster. It is waiting to receive the person you are becoming.

Charm to destroy: Oyster, Clam (vegan: Whole Walnuts)



## THE DEVIL *to those feeling trapped by toxic habits:*

You probably think this one isn't about you. After all, your bad habits don't just show up out of nowhere, right? Life is tough, and people are annoying. Believe me, I get it. I had this friend, Sisyphus (see? Not about you!). Sisyphus was a king (he had a kingdom!), and he cheated death (he was not dead!), but there he was in the Underworld, rolling a boulder all the way up a hill, only to have it roll back down again – every day, for centuries. "It's my fate," he used to say to me, as though he was NOT technically still alive, as though he did NOT have a kingdom waiting for him – if he would only let the boulder go. One day I took the boulder away (I got bored), and he had to go rule his kingdom. He wasn't perfect, but he was a lot stronger after all that exercise. Anyway, I digress...

Charm to destroy: Banana

## Let It Catch

Noah Phoenix

-1-

A hitch in my chest  
and shortness of breath

Could this be  
hope  
Or its shadow?

I taste Tomorrow  
I taste Our Future  
I see the glint  
the glow  
the mirror

The match strikes  
once  
twice  
a spark  
will it Catch?

-2-

almosts  
maybes  
oaths  
'til it passes

false starts  
dissolve  
in the crowns of  
dead matches

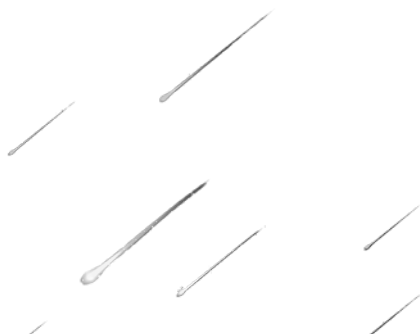
trees turn  
leaves toward sky  
call it madness

Two magnets pulled towards  
yet

Sliding a  
w  
a  
y

Two stars  
Same galaxy  
One certain

collide



last drops  
in drought before  
all burns to ashes

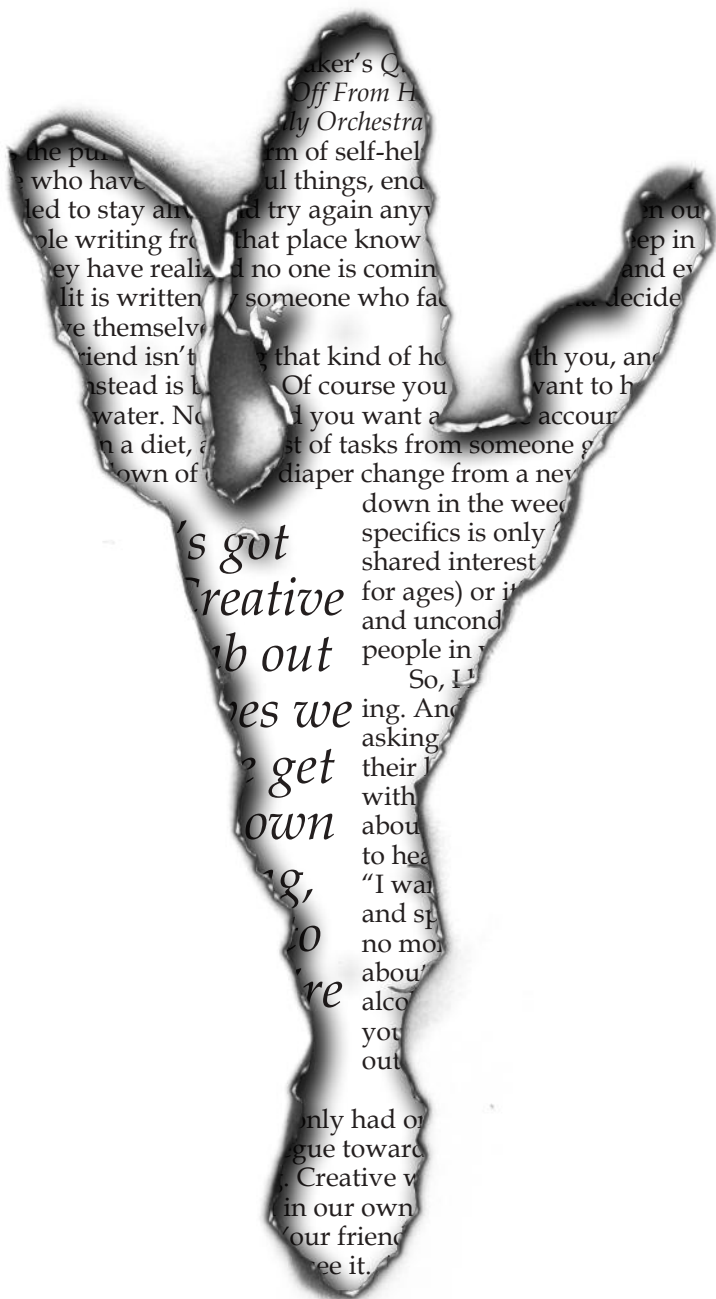
who will We be  
will We be  
when it catches

will it be  
will it be  
let it be  
let it



Catch





## The unquiet quitter: how did I become my friend's "abstinence accountant"?

*Dear Sky is the Mystic Moneymaker's advice column. Do you have a problem you cannot seem to get past? Does your soul hurt? Would it help to hear a stranger say something you maybe need to hear? Do you want to be kinder, truer, braver? Send a letter, anonymously or not, to Sky at [all.the.stars.in.the@gmail.com](mailto:all.the.stars.in.the@gmail.com) and look for the answer in next month's issue.*

Dear Sky,

I've become an unofficial sobriety sponsor for a long-distance friend. The friend is an ex, with whom I am on otherwise very good terms and whose presence I value in my life — but as they've struggled with reducing their dependence on alcohol, that topic has started to envelop all of our conversations. Their recovery journey has taken fits and starts and while I respect and support their journey, our conversations have become singularly focused on them proving their sobriety to me. For instance: shoehorning in that even if a story took place at a bar, they themselves were drinking ice water; confessing "relapses" to me ("I had one cocktail last week. But only one!") totally unprompted.

I support their journey, but I miss hearing about other aspects of their life. I'm also uncomfortable with feeling like a 'sobriety cop' and unclear how I got shoehorned into that role in the first place. Is there a way to gently change the topic without sounding dismissive or unsupportive of their recovery?

-Not a Cop

Dear Not a Cop,

I fricking love quit lit. Holly Whitaker's *Quit Like a Woman*, Laura McKowen's *Push Off From Here*, everything submitted to *The Small Bow Family Orchestra* on substack.

Quit lit is the purest, realest form of self-help. It is written by people who have done awful things, endured awful things, and then decided to stay alive and try again anyway. Incredible. Ten out of ten. People writing from that place know what it is to be deep in the mud. They have realized no one is coming to save them, and every piece of quit lit is written by someone who faced truth and decided they wanted to save themselves.

But your friend isn't being that kind of honest with you, and what they're doing instead is boring. Of course you don't want to hear about every sip of ice water. Nor would you want a precise accounting of meals from someone on a diet, a full list of tasks from someone gunning for promotion, or a rundown of every diaper change from a new parent. Getting

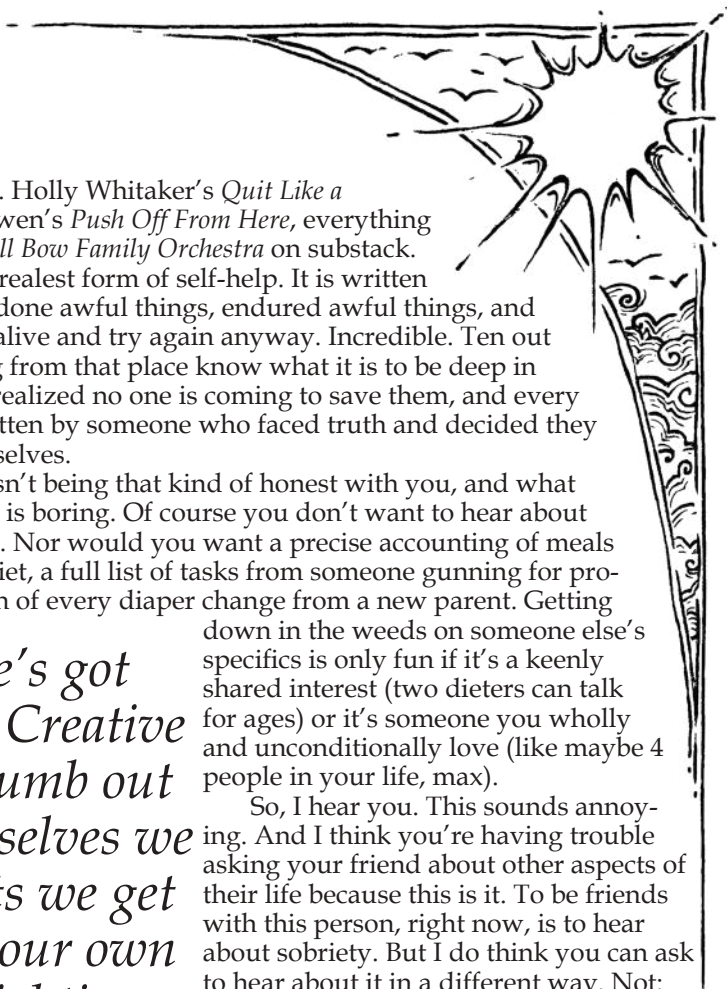
*Everyone's got something. Creative ways we numb out and tell ourselves we don't, fights we get trapped in our own heads re-fighting, problems we lie to ourselves that we're handling.*

down in the weeds on someone else's specifics is only fun if it's a keenly shared interest (two dieters can talk for ages) or it's someone you wholly and unconditionally love (like maybe 4 people in your life, max).

So, I hear you. This sounds annoying. And I think you're having trouble asking your friend about other aspects of their life because this is it. To be friends with this person, right now, is to hear about sobriety. But I do think you can ask to hear about it in a different way. Not: "I want to know every margarita slip up and spare no detail." But: "Ok my friend, no more accounting. Tell me what this is about for you. Without the numbing of alcohol, what permafrost is melting inside you? What ancient viruses are thawing out? Tell me about the mud."

Their answer will be much more interesting than the "I promise I only had one cocktail" conversation you're currently having. And it's a great segue towards a topic that also includes you, because everyone's got something. Creative ways we numb out and tell ourselves we don't, fights we get trapped in our own heads re-fighting, problems we lie to ourselves that we're handling. Your friend is struggling hard to get braver, to be more honest. Let them know you see it. Answer it in kind.

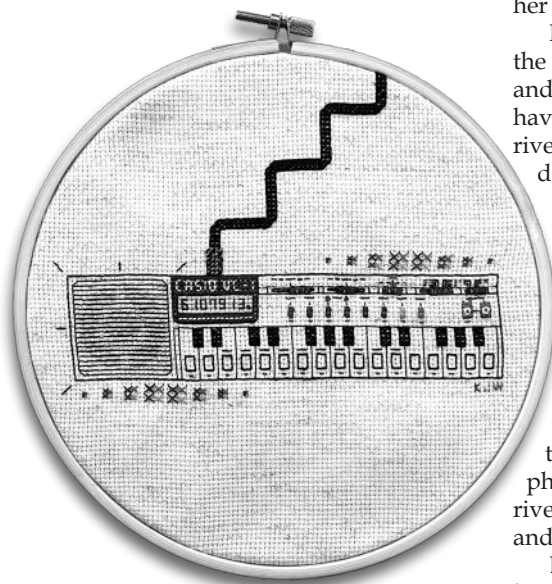
All the stars,  
Sky



# DELPHINUS

a short story by Aliza Razell

THE PHOTOGRAPHER ARRIVED at Delphinus before dark. She knew that something was wrong as she neared the bottom of the stairwell and first heard the music. It *ntch-pa-pa-ntch*-ed throughout the canal system, sending grenades of sound down into the black silty depths. But the layers of metal and stone that made up the club's roof kept any sound from reaching the city above. You'd have no idea there was a club there until you got down the stairs and heard the music.



But there wasn't supposed to be any music yet.

She had been over tonight's plans ad nauseam: she was to arrive early and capture the last of the evening light while the venue was still empty. She'd charged Pollo extra for this. It was a question of supply and demand, and her time was in demand. She didn't have to tell him that she was only taking on a gig like this because of their history. He wanted the best. That's why he'd asked her, and that's why she was here early, at golden hour. He'd made her sign a waiver about exactly how many arms and legs she'd owe him if any Delphinus equipment was

damaged on her watch. Because she was supposed to have the place to herself.

So what were all these people doing here? Why was there music?

By the time she entered Delphinus' glass bubble, the photographer was fuming. One hand grasped the strap of her equipment bag and the other ran through her hair, which she wore patchily shaved in that style that was ironic-trendy amongst artists in the riverlands, but plain ridiculous anywhere else on earth.

A smell pervaded the bar, like the fermented river-scum liquor she had pretended to like back in art school. Did kids still drink that stuff? She wrinkled her nose and muttered a juicy curse.

In the dim light, she could see that the crowd wore uniformly grimy clothes and greasy hairstyles that wouldn't have looked out of place in the the riverlands' edgiest tattercore clubs. They danced blearily, as if they'd all been pregaming with snooze needles. They couldn't have looked more out of place amidst the Delphinus decor, which leaned into retro-classical minimalism.

She unpacked her camera. Pollo would surely find her soon and fill her in, but in the meantime there was no denying that the scene would make for dramatic photos: the tattercore dancers, haloed river-green against the darkened marble-and-glass interiors of Delphinus.

Beyond the dance floor, an invisible layer of glass holding back the endlessly teeming water on all sides.

Camera secured in hip holster, the photographer wandered through the venue, snapping candid test-shots as she went. The putrid river-scum liquor must have been on tap; the whole place reeked of it.

She was viscerally reminded of dorm parties she'd rather forget.

What would her art school posse say if they could see her now? Successful didn't even begin to cover it—she was the highest-paid event photographer in the colony. But that smell tugged at something deeper. When was the last time she'd picked up her camera for fun,

let alone for real art? Long gone were the days of Pollo's smoky dorm room salons, when they'd stayed up all night drinking river-scum and talking shit about the latest "sell-out" who'd cast aside his real voice for a paycheck from a marketing firm. Is that what they'd call her now, working her swanky gigs downtown? A sell-out? Or if they'd had the chance, would they have also come to realize that real success only happens to artists who follow the money?

When the photographer stopped to look at her camera, she was in the middle of the dance floor. Dancers surrounded her, but the image on her camera's screen was of an empty venue.

She looked up at the crowd lurching around her and back down at the camera. Flicked through the images she'd taken: empty, empty, and empty again.

That's when she started to notice their movements: awkward and uncomfortable. Different than the languid dancing you'd expect from snoozers. Something was not right about this crowd. The fermented river-scum stench wafted towards her and her head swam.

She needed to get her bearings, but any route off the dance floor was crowded with writhing limbs. Someone stepped on her foot and she wasn't even sure which of the tight-pressed bodies to focus her annoyance at.

Yet according to her camera, Delphinus was completely abandoned. On her screen, she could make out her own reflection in the glass wall on the opposite side of the bar.

Beyond her reflection, if she was paying attention, she might have glimpsed me.

My Specimens were doing well so far. It had taken their fellow-human some time before she suspected anything was amiss about them. For present purposes, this was more effective than if I had completely reanimated them.

I wish I could say that was intentional.

Still, I'd come a long way since my first Specimen. He was back in the early days of their settlement here, when I was still getting used to the new landscape.

After the ice sheet melted, my comfortable home expanded from an isolated lake to a massive network of rivers and marshes. I'd only just begun to explore this new world when I encountered my first human.

He fell into my life just as his was ending. Technically, he was dead before he started falling—but that is another, smaller story. Human Specimen One was born when I heard him ku-flup into the river. I met him in his fall and accompanied him down, down, down to the blackest silty deeps.

Nobody should make that journey alone.

I considered him, as we fell. This delicate little creature who had travelled across the planet to settle this new landscape. Like me, he'd had to accept that his familiar home was never coming back. We fell until we reached the place where there are no sounds. There I left him, for several silt-tides.

My silts reacted differently to him than to other mammals I'd worked with. When I let him go, he was clearly a first attempt, but I allowed myself some pride. As he ambled across the land I swam along underneath to listen. His footsteps shuffled somewhat differently than most of his species, but the walking rhythm was more or less the same.

I was pleased to have assisted my new neighbors, this soft species who had never before known life after death.

My human languages weren't so good then (I am a slow learner and I'd only just begun study), but the terror that unfolded on land needed no language.



YOU WERE ROUGH-HOUSING WITH THE PHOENIX KIDS AGAIN, WEREN'T YOU?



Human Specimen One had returned to his own but they didn't want him.

He had changed too much.

*Give me a few more tries, I thought, and I'll get the hang of you.*

As they arrived in droves, I studied them. Their changing languages and customs, their rhythms, their weaknesses and their aches and their joys, their anomalies. And the Specimens duly improved.

Human Specimen Six Hundred and Eighty Two was a marvel. She lived much longer than previous specimens, and demonstrated motor skills almost perfectly aligned with her demographic's average. She had endurance and fury levels above average, and underdeveloped inhibition and compassion levels. These are the kind of imbalances you might not notice in the silt, but they become pronounced when a Specimen rejoins her society.

She was a roaring success to me, but to them she was a nightmare.

For generations after, they told stories about her. And about me.

That was when I made myself a home in their lore, and I've had many human names since.

They were calling me Hellsnake when we made our deal. They pleaded for me to never revive their kind again, and asked what I would require in return. *Anything*, they said, *we'll give you absolutely anything*.

So, I made my requests.

From now on, their dead would be left in the water (instead of in the ground where they weren't any good to anybody), and the humans must no longer let their constructions or contaminations interrupt my waters.

In return, I promised not to release another recomposed human onto the land.

I would miss testing my Specimens in actual human settings, but on balance, it was worthwhile for the sheer number of test subjects I had coming in, not to mention the renewed peace and quiet.

Besides, it wasn't long until the humans broke their side of the bargain.

And when they did, I had silt-beds full of Specimens just waiting to be tested.

Delphinus was not their first transgression. Especially in the early days, when their settlement was rapidly expanding, they seemed desperate to forget our

deal. Each time they started learning, a new shipment of settlers would arrive, more hubristic than the last. There were secret burials and—even more wastefully—incinerations. But within a few generations they became accustomed to donating their dead to the river, and soon required only occasional reminders.

My second request would prove more difficult for them. They paved the riverbeds and dug canals, which pinched my tides. Constructions collapsed into the river and corroded my banks with their foundations. They went through several iterations of riverboat before finding an engine model that didn't cast significant repercussions into my realm.

I reacted to each act in kind, never wreaking more terror with my Specimens than the destruction they'd caused in their breach of our agreement. I honed in on different traits in different Specimen batches.

I like to think that no matter what new deal-breach the humans concoct, I have the perfect response up my silt.

So when they started constructing Delphinus, I eagerly coiled myself in the darkness below.

What would it be this time?

They put the structure together on land, submerging a polished construction into the water: all glass and stone and unoffending rounded edges.

Briefly, I thought that would be all.

But then the music started. The thudding rhythmic baselines were the worst part: the way they permeated the river. They sliced through my silty silences and tilted my tides. The water reverberated throughout my marshes. Krill and sharks complained alike.

As my underwater neighbors despaired, I had to tamper my mirth.

Oh, Delphinus had not caught me unprepared.

The photographer was unable to move. A gooey combination of horror and curiosity glued her to the dance floor.

The fading sunlight had illuminated one of the dancers long enough for her blood to run cold with recognition.

But... *how?*

She'd kissed his cold cheek before his

body was lowered into a watery grave. The same body that bobbed and twitched on the dance-floor in front of her.

The light shifted and he disappeared into the crowd, but she'd know his face anywhere.

The face that had launched her career.

The face that had screamed while it tried in vain to escape a burning building. She had happened to be out that night, happened to have her camera ready when she smelled the smoke, when she rounded the corner.

Her finger had pressed the shutter button before her mind caught up and told her to run.

And then there was this photo.

This one photo of a scream and a blaze and a death, immortalized. This photo that turned her from another idealist art student to the phenomenal young photo-journalist, who was winning every award. The press fell over themselves, and she sold the photo to the highest bidder.

She would receive royalties for the rest of her life.

That smell.

How had she not noticed that it was emanating from the dancers themselves?

She gagged and squinted, trying to locate the door without moving. Moving meant maybe bumping into one of the zombies.

She'd heard stories of the Rivergobbler as a girl.

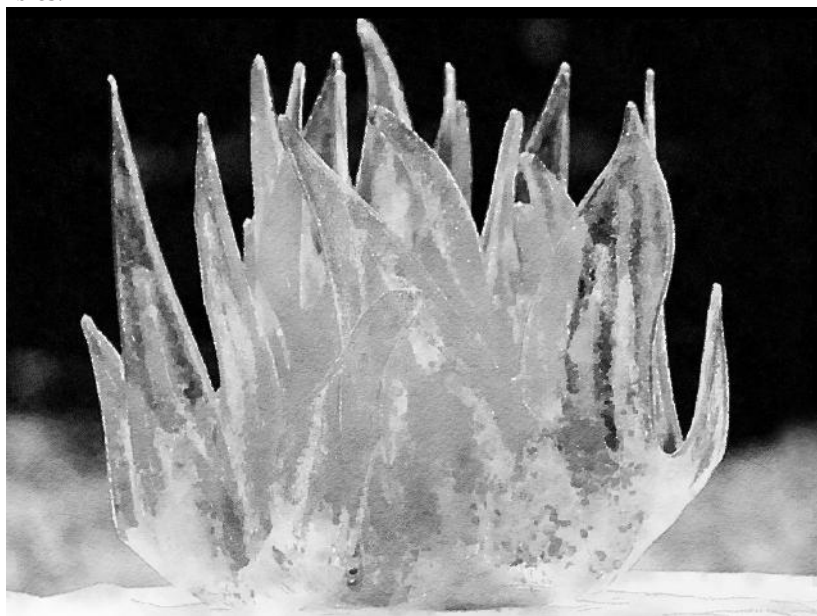
Fabulous stories about underwater dragons and deals with the devil. She had a vague memory that you weren't supposed to touch the zombies, but what about their clothes? What if you had to squeeze past them on a crowded dance floor in order to get to the door that would take you out of this nightmare? There was some rhyme about eye-contact, but she couldn't remember if it was encouraged or forbidden. She wracked her memory, but they'd just been stories and she had never had much of a memory for fiction.

And then the light was gone.

And she was in an underwater prison full of zombies.

As the darkness set in, the zombies began to sing. •

*This short story was originally written for the Lighthouse Libraries series, and published in a handful of Little Free Libraries on the full moon of October, 2021. It was revived and revised into the present version.*



Kurt James Werner  
January 2025

**1**

[illegible]

Part 2

C/E

1.

F

C/G

Dm

F

C/E

F

2.

Dm7/G

G

C/G

G7

F

Dm

C/E

F

G

Dm7/G

G7

Dm7

F

I wrote this tune, "The Invention of Stratics," in January 2025. It is dedicated to my dear lady wife Melissa. She is a professor of games, and once—in expounding on the difference between tactics and strategy, wondered why nobody had ever dared to combine the two. And that, dear reader, was the day that "stratics" was invented. The key to beautifully rendering this piece is to bring out the implied upper and lower voices in the melody, to attend to the tricky rhythm and phrasing of the second endings, and to manage the the long lines that spill past cadences to feather smoothly into each new phrase. Note that "×" noteheads indicate drone notes (non-banjo players should ignore these!) and "∧" indicates upstrokes (I use my ring finger, but YMMV). I've left most fingering marks out, except the first line and where something fancy is happening. Enjoy!

—Kurt (kurt.james.werner@gmail.com)

# RED PEPPER PASTA WITH MEATBALLS

AN EXCERPT FROM THE PERSONAL CULINARY COMPENDIUM OF ONE PERRY FIERO

**VULTURE/PHOENIX.** When I saw the theme for this edition it instantly resonated with me. I often find my cooking philosophy to align rather neatly with these two birds. Vulture; saving vegetable scraps and bones to make stock, using excess ingredients from one recipe to inspire the next, waste not want not. Phoenix; taking less than desirable leftovers and elevating them to some exciting new form, most recently reincarnating some chicken tortilla soup into burritos. This recipe came to be after I had a surplus of dill from another culinary endeavor and I saw an ad for a red bell pepper pasta from an unnamed meal delivery service. Combining those two scraps like a vulture I raised the ingredients through fire and flames into something new and delectable, and thus rose the phoenix.

## INGREDIENTS

**MEATBALLS**

- 1/2 Tbsp Olive Oil
- 1/2 Lb Ground Beef
- 1 Tbsp Dill, Finely Chopped (dried is a fine substitute)
- 1 Tbsp Parsley, Finely Chopped (dried is a fine substitute)
- 4 Garlic Cloves, Grated
- 1 Egg
- Salt
- Pepper

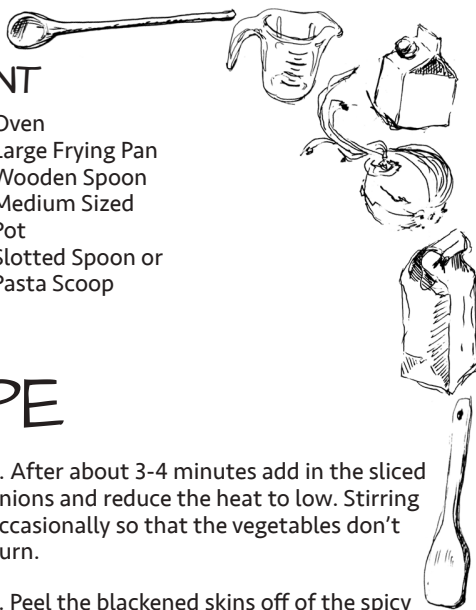
**PASTA**

- 1 Lb Short Round Pasta (i.e. Penne, Rotini)
- 1 Tsp Olive Oil
- 2 Spicy Red Peppers (Chef's choice for your comfort and spice level, I used peppers approximately the size of jalapeños, my grocery store didn't specify what kind they were)
- 1 Bell Pepper, Sliced into thin 1-2 inch strips
- 1 Onion, Sliced into thin 1-2 inch strips
- 6 Garlic Cloves, Grated
- 1/4 Cup Heavy Cream
- 1/2 Cup Parmesan Cheese, Grated
- Salt
- Pepper

## EQUIPMENT

- Knife
- Cutting Board
- Medium Sized Mixing Bowl
- Oven Safe Frying Pan
- Tongs
- Stovetop
- Oven
- Large Frying Pan
- Wooden Spoon
- Medium Sized Pot
- Slotted Spoon or Pasta Scoop

## RECIPE



1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Add olive oil to an oven safe frying pan and heat until shimmering and just beginning to smoke. Boil water for the pasta, add salt if desired.

2. In a medium sized mixing bowl combine the ground beef, dill, parsley, garlic, egg, and salt and pepper to taste until a homogenous mixture forms. Form meatballs, and add to the preheated pan on the stove.

3. Sear the meatballs on all sides until well browned, approximately 2-3 minutes a side.

4. While you are searing the meatballs roast the two spicy red peppers over an open flame until blackened on all sides. Remove from heat and set aside to rest wrapped in foil for 5-10 minutes. This will steam the peppers and make the blackened skins easier to remove.

5. Once the meatballs have been seared on all sides, add the pan directly into the preheated oven for 10-15 minutes to finish cooking the meatballs. They should reach an internal temperature of at least 165°F.

6. Begin boiling the pasta.

7. Put the remaining 1 tsp olive oil into a large frying pan over high heat, once it is shimmering and beginning to smoke, add the sliced bell pepper into the pan and stir. The high heat will sear the peppers and some color should develop on the bottom of the pan.

8. After about 3-4 minutes add in the sliced onions and reduce the heat to low. Stirring occasionally so that the vegetables don't burn.

9. Peel the blackened skins off of the spicy peppers, chop off the stems and discard. The peppers should be very soft, with the seeds still inside dice the peppers very finely, at times dragging the pieces between the side of your knife and the cutting board. This should further smash the pepper into a paste-like consistency.

10. Add the spicy red pepper paste and grated garlic to the pan with the onions and peppers, at this time the meatballs should be done. Pour any drippings from the pan with the meatballs into the pan with the vegetables and set the meatballs aside. Stir to incorporate.

11. Add in the heavy cream and stir until incorporated, cut the heat and add in half of the parmesan cheese. Mix well until all the cheese is melted.

12. Scoop the pasta directly from the pot it was in to the sauce, this direct transfer will result in some of the pasta water mixing in with the sauce, helping it to achieve the proper consistency. Once the pasta is fully mixed, add the remaining parmesan cheese and mix until it has melted.

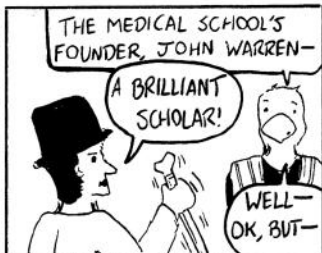
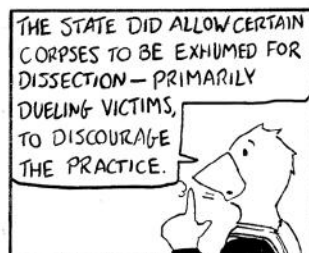
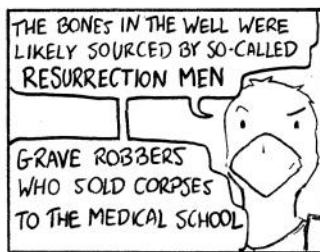
13. Add the meatballs to the pasta pan and stir into the dish to coat them in the sauce as well. Add more pasta water as desired if the sauce is too thick, or more parmesan if it is too thin.

14. Serve and enjoy!



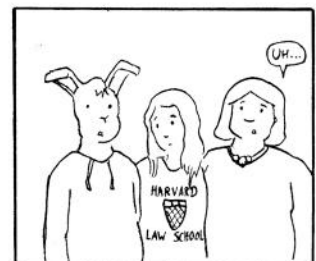
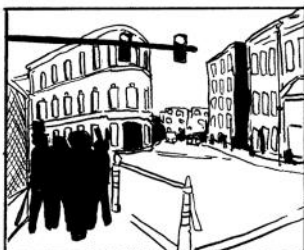






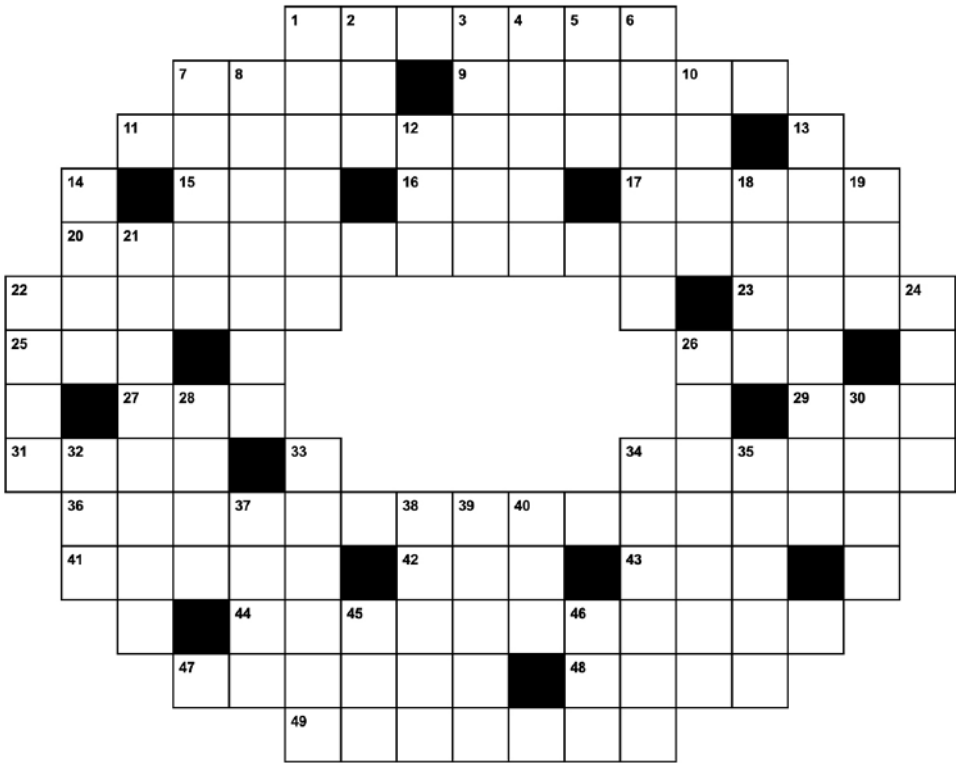






# BIRD IS THE WORD

Vulture and Phoenix edition bagel crossword By Carrington House



## ACROSS

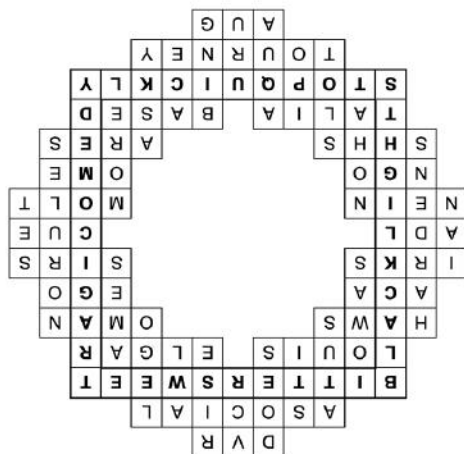
- 1 A fancy dabbling duck
- 7 Lasting blemish
- 9 Who plays the duck in Peter and the Wolf
- 11 24k layer?
- 15 Neither fish \_\_\_ fowl
- 16 Annoying critic, when combined with 27A
- 17 Large ecological category
- 20 Don't put all your \_\_\_\_\_
- 22 Flipped the bird, in ASL
- 23 Alack! What Spanish birds flap
- 25 Nail polish brand is Grandpop auf Deutsch
- 26 Where you might find Catcher, and caraway seeds
- 27 Neither the ostrich, kiwi, nor emu can do it
- 29 Agency tasked with keeping Americans 31A when they 27A
- 31 "Polly want a \_\_\_cracker?" – bank robber's bird, maybe
- 34 Showed salivary disdain for
- 36 "...stiff as a board."
- 41 Small picture of enlarged area
- 42 22.5°
- 43 Tiny Cratchit
- 44 Restrictively categorized dove nesting spot
- 47 The bagels above saintly heads
- 48 Started down a French street, regretted sounding impolite
- 49 Keeping up with a Yellow Tit or a Blue-Footed Booby?

## DOWN

- 1 European capital that is cuckoo free?
- 2 Contemporary "art"?
- 3 Scamble along to fly from Boston
- 4 A home built of adobe
- 5 Kanga's tot
- 6 An attorney's punishment, "a bird's" rearrangement
- 7 After 24D, final acts or accomplishments
- 8 "I fear you \_\_\_\_; I love you far away."
- 10 El número de letras de la palabra "pájaro"
- 12 Park '\_\_\_ (service for drivers at 3D, for example)
- 13 You have to break a few eggs to make one of these
- 14 Go back for more
- 18 🍷
- 19 Greek letter after z\_\_
- 21 Half eagles, half lions
- 22 C-suite bird call?
- 24 A grown up cygnet
- 26 Turtle, snake, lizard, and probably birds too
- 28 Penguins' are very short
- 30 How your wings feel after too much flapping
- 32 Baba, G, Express, etc.
- 33 Hun number one, or a ploughman in New England?
- 34 Did not partake in
- 35 Current Ethiopian PM
- 37 Air filters' efficiency standard acronym
- 38 Lip curling grimace
- 39 A beak, on a mammal
- 40 Duck habitat like D54 sdrawkcab
- 45 River\_\_\_bler, see *Delphinus*
- 46 What dozens of mins. becomes

## OPPOSITES ATTRACT

Answers for previous Ice and Scoot edition bagel crossword by Carrington House





### WHAT CREATURE ARE YOU?

#### PICK A PLACE TO LIVE

- A) A TREEHOUSE HIGH ABOVE THE GROUND
- B) A VILLA AT THE FOOT OF A VOLCANO
- C) A CABIN DEEP IN THE FOREST
- D) A COTTAGE IN A MEADOW FULL OF FLOWERS

#### YOU'RE IN A PRODUCTION OF HAMLET. WHAT'S YOUR ROLE?

- A) BACKSTAGE CREW
- B) YOU'RE THE LEAD—HAMLET HIMSELF, BABY!
- C) THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, WHISPERING LINES TO THE ACTORS
- D) A MINOR CHARACTER WHO STEALS THE SCENE

#### BIG PARTY TONIGHT. WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?

- A) ALL BLACK EVERYTHING
- B) JEWEL TONES AND GLITTER
- C) SOMETHING TIGHT AND SLINKY AND PROBABLY LEATHER
- D) FLORALS (GROUNDBREAKING)

#### PICK A WORLD TO DISAPPEAR INTO

- A) THE DARK CRYSTAL
- B) ANCIENT GREECE
- C) MOSSFLOWER WOODS FROM REDWALL
- D) A BUG'S LIFE

#### YOU FIND THE CORPSE OF A RABBIT BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD. WHAT DO YOU DO?

- A) EAT IT. WASTE NOT, WANT NOT, BABY!
- B) BURN THE BODY AND USE THE ASHES IN A SPELL
- C) RUN AWAY
- D) SKIN IT, STUFF IT, AND SELL IT ON FACEBOOK MARKETPLACE

**AN A ANSWER IS WORTH 1 POINT. A B ANSWER IS WORTH 2 POINTS. A C ANSWER IS WORTH 3 POINTS. A D ANSWER IS WORTH 4 POINTS. CALCULATE YOUR TOTAL!**

**5-8 POINTS: THE  
VULTURE**

**YOU'RE SORT OF THE  
MASTER OF TURNING A  
BAD SITUATION INTO ONE  
YOU CAN GROW FROM.**



**13-16 POINTS: THE  
SNAKE**

**SHED WHAT WEIGHS YOU  
DOWN AND BECOME THE  
NEW YOU. IT'S THE YEAR  
OF THE SNAKE, BABY!**



**9-12 POINTS: THE  
PHOENIX**

**YOUR LIFE KINDA NEEDS  
TO GO UP IN FLAMES  
BEFORE YOU'RE ABLE TO  
MOVE ON. CALM DOWN A  
LITTLE!**



**17-20 POINTS: THE  
CATERPILLAR**

**KEEP ON CRAWLING.  
YOU'RE ABOUT TO BE  
LITERALLY SO BEAUTIFUL  
I PROMISE.**



*Though the vulture and phoenix seem  
opposite, don't be quick to judge:  
they're more similar than they are  
different.*

The vulture preens in the mirror, it's  
The phoenix endures, struggling through the

□ \_ \_ \_

The vulture is charming, sophisticated,  
The phoenix is stubbly, in need of a

\_ \_ □ \_ \_ \_

The vulture loves wealth: money, jewels, or  
The phoenix is virtuous: it only wants to do

\_ \_ □ \_

The vulture goes shopping, filling its  
The phoenix spends time giving comfort and

\_ \_ \_ □

The vulture is hungry, always stuffing its  
The phoenix waits weeks, feasting just once a

\_ \_ □ \_ \_

The vulture relies on the strength of its  
The phoenix is keen, using far-sighted

\_ □ \_

When danger nears, the vulture will turn and  
The phoenix will not break but bend, twist,

\_ \_ \_ □

Answers: VAIN/PAIN, SUAVE/SHAVE, GOLD/GOOD, CART/CARE, MOUTH/MONTH, ARM/AIM, FLEE/FLEX

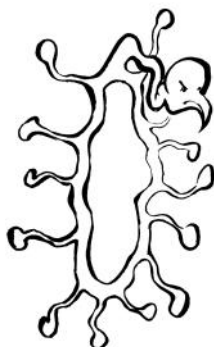
Each image below represents a word or phrase where "culture" has been replaced with "vulture." For example, an answer could be "vulture wars."



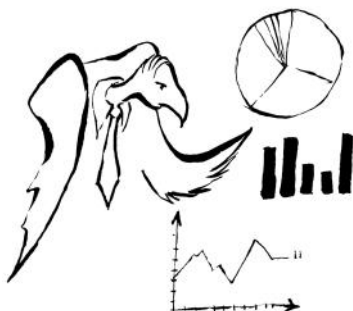
A: vulture \_\_\_\_\_



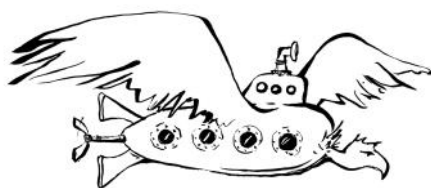
B: \_\_\_\_\_ vulture



C: \_\_\_\_\_ vulture



D: \_\_\_\_\_ vulture



E: \_\_\_ vulture



G: \_\_\_\_\_ vulture



F: \_\_ vulture



H: \_\_\_ vulture

# THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

| <i>pp</i> | <i>title</i>                    | <i>contributor</i>                                   |
|-----------|---------------------------------|--|
| 2         | Retrospect Vintage              | Aliza Razell @alizarazell, John Lapsley @norlock_art |
| 4         | Until it is Spring              | Sami Vesakoivu                                       |
| 5         | Rebirth of the Dying Swan       | PisPis   |
| 6         | The Waiting Game                | Will Reber @williamreber                             |
| 7         | Note to Self                    | @petros.music  |
| 8         | A Villanelle for Lystrosaurus   | Melissa Kagen  |
| 9         | The Fisherman                   | @alexandraaa.art                                     |
| 10        | untitled                        | @_eegahh_  |
| 11        | Got a Spine? Use It.            | PSA Team   |
| 12        | Tarotscope                      | Eve Starlantern                                      |
| 14        | Let It Catch                    | Noah Phoenix @thanksbutnoah                          |
| 15        | Phoenix Print                   | Aliza Razell @alizarazell                            |
| 16        | Dear Sky                        | all.the.stars.in.the@gmail.com                       |
| 18        | Delphinus                       | Aliza Razell @alizarazell                            |
| 18        | Casio VL-1 cross stitch         | Kurt James Werner, kurt.james.werner@gmail.com       |
| 19        | Roughhousing                    | L. Ratz  |
| 22        | The Invention of Stractics      | Kurt James Werner, kurt.james.werner@gmail.com       |
| 24        | Red Pepper Pasta With Meatballs | Perry Fiero  |
| 26        | Context Chronicle               | John Lapsley @norlock_art                            |
| 30        | Bird is the Word                | Carrington House                                     |
| 32        | What Creature Are You?          | Christine Engels / @xtineengels                      |
| 34        | A Word Puzzle                   | Ben Tolkin   |
| 35        | Culture Vultures                | Aliza Razell @alizarazell                            |

additional thanks to: Tanya Iordanova, Dan Iordanov, Ian and Jasmine, and everyone who came to the second issue launch party at Remnant. Since you made it all this way, here's a "hidden track": this month's secret cocktail, courtesy of Ian Hoover: 1.5 oz Singani (or another brandy); .5 oz lemon; .5 oz egg white; 0.5 oz herbal liqueur (Fontbonne or Brovo work). Shake well and serve in a chilled glass. The Mystic MoneyMaker is edited by Aliza and John and Corry.

February 7 2025

