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Editor's Note

It's April, gerbils and ladybugs. The fruit trees are flinging their blooms on the floor like temperamental flower girls, the warm breezes are riffling the ostrich feathers on our fancy-ass hats, and the robins are CHOMPING WORMS IN HALF and EATING THEM RAW, according to Emily Dickinson, noted chronicler of bird and bee activities.

Like the season, this issue passes swiftly but leaves a lingering impression of wonders and delights. You can read it cover-to-cover and still have time for a sun-dappled stroll through the botanical gardens. Or a moonlit skulk through a haunted forest, if you are of the nocturnal persuasion.

— Laura Garrison

Colander

Paul Hostovsky

Yesterday I couldn't remember the word *colander*,
a word I love and have always thought of
as one of those words that's lovelier than the thing
itself. I was holding the thing itself in my hands,
the steaming angel hair pasta draining in the sink,
when I looked at the colander and thought to myself,
"What is the name of this thing?" And maybe it was
age, and maybe it was the beginning of something
more pernicious, but in the end we have to let go
of everything. We have to let go of every single
thing and its name. And because I have always loved
the names of things more than the things themselves
I stood at the sink missing *colander*, loving it more
than the colander, more than the angel hair pasta
that I chewed abstractedly over dinner, trying to locate
colander in my mouth, where it used to live
until it disappeared, its three slippery syllables
like three spaghetti noodles in a pot of spaghetti noodles.
And today, when I finally remembered it—found it right
where I'd left it—I whispered it to myself over and over
like a lover whispering the name of a lost beloved
who returns, but is untrue, and will disappear again.

PAUL HOSTOVSKY makes his living in Boston as a sign language interpreter. His newest book of poems is *PITCHING FOR THE APOSTATES* (forthcoming, Kelsay Books). His poems have won a Pushcart Prize, two Best of the Net Awards, the FutureCycle Poetry Book Prize, and have been featured on *Poetry Daily*, *Verse Daily*, and *The Writer's Almanac*. Website: paulhostovsky.com

haiku

Albert Schlaht

seagull frenzy
a beach with enough for all
feast of mermaid

A native of Big Sky Country, **ALBERT SCHLAHT**, resides in the Rockies, where he enjoys cool mountain breezes blowing into the valley, chilling his mind, enticing his imagination to splatter forth on paper in the form of short poems and flash fiction—at times, fairy blue, but occasionally, a black ink exits from darkness within, birthing words from the macabre.

Guitar Wolf

Harrison Fisher

The Giant Majin (1966)

The great Japanese
God of Rock 'n Roll come to
destroy the living.

Return of the Giant Majin (1966)

Manga, anime,
mountain, cloud, forest, village,
villagers—all gone.

HARRISON FISHER published twelve collections of poems from 1977 to 2000, most recently *Poematics of the Hyperbloody Real*. In 2022, after a long hiatus, he began publishing new poems in magazines again, among them *Apocalypse Confidential*, *BlazeVOX*, *e-ratio*, *Ligeia*, *Misfit Magazine*, *Otoliths*, and *#Ranger*.

Immediate Release

Jim Suruda

She's stretched out on the dirty dress shop floor. I squat down and grip one of her ankles, then grab the other. I stand up, lifting her so that just her head rests on the linoleum.

"ARE YOU READY!?" I shout as I lean back, swinging her around the shop. Clothes racks clatter to the floor. Big circles. Gaining speed.

"YOU! ARE! INVITED!"

I let go—now—to send her hurtling through the last unbroken shop window. Slow-motion spray of glass shards, slanting sunlight, then a fat splash as she lands in the middle of Saint Roch Avenue. I tuck another attendee under my arm and step out of the crumbling clothing shop. Years of creeper vines curtain the doorway.

Silence covers the city. A bullfrog calls. Dragonflies dance over the bayou that was once a street.

"ALLOW ME TO ACCOMPANY YOU TO THE VENUE!" I hoist my two new friends under my arms. "THIS IS YOUR LUCKY DAY!"

I push through the cattails that cover the muddy sidewalk and wade into the duckweed carrying my attendees.

"SO MUCH DUCKWEED!"

Nothing with fur or feathers survived the incident. No people. No pets.

"NO DUCKS!"

Just me and the turtles and anoles and the lazy —

Gravity reverses. The water on my right swells upward, unhinges, and opens wide to become rows of dripping teeth rushing at me.

“MOTHERFUCKER!”

I shove a mannequin into the gator's gaping mouth. He spins and spins, snapping the legs off the attendee, tossing up lily pads from his roil. I run, dragging the other mannequin to high ground.

“ONE HUNDRED! I STILL HAVE ENOUGH!”

My damp shirt clings to my chest and my one remaining boot squelches as I step up to the podium. I drip for a moment and scan the audience.

“THANK YOU FOR COMING!” They are rapt. Unmoving. “TO THE OFFICIAL RELEASE OF MY MEMOIR!”

It's been two years since the event. Two years to write, edit, and type by hand. Two years to collect attendees. Two years since I invented a purpose.

I've finished my memoir, and now, here they are. I clear my throat and look out over ninety-five mannequins. They pose in chairs or lean on the walls of the warehouse. They wear hats, scarves, or Mardi Gras beads. Near the front sits a brass statue of FDR that I dragged back through the muck from the WWII museum. In the back, three life-sized cutouts from an animated movie stand quietly. Duckweed speckles my final guest: the mannequin I tossed through the window this morning.

A drop of sweat wets the page as I read the first paragraph. It's too hot in here. My voice is shaky. I'm nervous. Spoken aloud the sentences seem too long, too wordy. If there was just one editor left

alive. As I speak, I feel the muscles of my neck tighten. I want to be finished. I keep reading.

Finally, I shut the manuscript and exhale.

“ANY QUESTIONS!?” I grin at the audience. A house finch flits in through the open door, perches on FDR's head, and rubs its beak on the brass. No one moves. No one speaks. All right. OK.

“WELL THEN,” I snatch a bottle off the podium, “I'M DONE HERE!” The pills rattle invitingly. Oxymorphone, 10 mg, immediate release.

“NOW FOR MY FINAL TRICK!”

A breeze moves through the crowd, rustles the sleeve of an attendee in the third row.

“QUESTION?!” I snap upright. “YOU, WITH THE GLASSES!”

I tug my beard as I stare at her mouth. I never expected such success!

“MOVIE DEAL?!”

I squelch back and forth behind the podium.

“THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING!”

The bottle rattles on the floor as I clutch my manuscript to my chest.

“WHY, YES, I CAN GET TO HOLLYWOOD!” I cackle and dance. “I LEAVE TODAY!”

I'm gonna need another boot.

JIM SURUDA is a writer based in New Orleans Louisiana. He edits an erotica zine, builds terrariums, and enjoys taking photographs. Jim Suruda has previously worked as a commercial fisherman, a clinical research subject for morphine metabolism, and as a pool table mover.

On the cover:

“Mirror of Orthrus”

VIVIEN KRANTZ is a young artist whose work is concerned with the darker aspects of being “human.” She is fascinated with the macabre and the shadow selves, as well as dissonant aspects of personality. Vivien lives in Michigan and enjoys horror movies, goth and alternative music, and collecting vinyl. She plans to attend art school in the future.

