

WHAT'S INSIDE

see p36 for full credits

Miscellany	2
Horoscope: Sparks and Recs	4
Valley Verse: A Spark Lost in Translation	6
Flash Fiction: Body of Water	9
Paranahmal Activity: A Firsthand Guide to MA's Haunted Triangle	11
Tear-out Calendars	15
Cocktail Recipe: Fairy Fire	18
Dear Sky	20
Flash Fiction: Rara Avis	22
Combating Hopelessness	24
Kurt's Banjo Bonfire	28
Spark of Life	30
Context Chronicle: Cyberpunk	32
Games + Puzzles	33

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

OKAY LISTEN YOU ARE KIND OF HOLDING A HAUNTED ARTIFACT. This issue was plagued with gremlins: some cool interviews had to be delayed, some awesome ideas got stuck in production, and then a virus pushed the whole thing back a full week. Even as we write this, the neighbor's fire alarm won't stop bleating, so consider it a minor miracle if **Swamp & Spark** even gets printed

It's entirely our fault: we absolutely had to visit Massachusetts' most haunted wetlands for this issue (p11), so odds are we brought something back with us. But, as the bearer, wouldn't you rather know an object is cursed right from the get-go? Whole movies are based on this premise: shopkeeper warns you an item carries a terrible curse, you pick it up anyway in exchange for magical gifts (beauty, youth, revenge)...things generally go okay from there? I dunno, most movies put me to sleep.

So: what are the promised gifts in this behexed booklet? Escape, for one: disappear into collages (p19) and cross-stitches (p7) and flash fiction (p9, p22); read poetry aloud in its original Finnish (it's a phonetic language! just move slowly, like an incantation); read advice from your neighbors on combating cynicism (20) and hopelessness (24); then tear out the calendar on p15 so that you remember when to submit **your art** for issue #5.

Seem like an okay deal? If not, everyone who's seen *It Follows* knows what to do with a curse: pass it along to a friend!

As always, you can subscribe at **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).

The next issue's theme is **Lipstick & Laundromats**. Think unexpected windows into the lives of strangers; curls of cigarette smoke under droning neon; catching your own reflection over the bar at the end of the night and looking so goddamn sexy you surprise yourself. Submissions are due by the **full moon on May 12**.

"Always be around." John Cage

"Would you like to buy some eggs?" Mac Demarco, 2023

"The act of creating a song is the closest I have ever felt to understanding the 'place' of your consciousness. You travel to a mind palace in those moments—a landscape you've made, then furnished through memory and invention. It's the cheapest way to travel." Neko Case, *The Harder I Fight The More I Love You* (2025)

chronophage • something that eats time. Term coined for social media by sociologist Richard Seymour

"It's a real mindfuck for smart people to hear that many of the nazis are really smart. [...] People ask me if [white supremacist] Richard Spencer is dumb. **Here's the thing: Who fucking cares?** What matters is that [he] has made unethical decisions to hurt many people and worked to make civilization more cruel. What's scary is that, as with so many smart people, **what helped him do it was his total faith in his own brilliance.**" Elle Reeve, *Black Pill* (2024)

"It is important to my writing [to] always leave when I know the next sentence." Robert Caro (2025)

Narragansett Bay Community Symphony Orchestra concert. June 7, 3pm, East Providence High School, RI

WHERE: The abyss near you. WHEN:

We haven't synchronized clocks yet, but your now should be timely enough. **WHY:** Abyss is lonely and would like some company. **WHAT?:** Email clodhopping1323@gmail.com if confused.

"[T]he problematic of coalition is that coalition isn't something that emerges so that you can come help me, a maneuver that always gets traced back to your own interests. The coalition emerges out of your recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that it's fucked up for us. I don't need your help. **I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid mother-fucker,** you know?" Fred Moten, paraphrasing Fred Hampton, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (2013)

hot maple lemonade • 1 oz lemon juice; 1 oz maple syrup; 8 oz hot water

"Simply as a gap in the unknown, doubt can be the emergency exit that leads somewhere else." Jenny Odell, *Saving Time* (2023)



GREEN LIVERY by Cynthia Wong

Pub Sing at the Sea Hag in Harvard Sq., noon–3pm, Sunday April 6

"How can we write ecosystems rather than individuals? A hero's journey implies a singular hero and a linear path. How can we write stories with crisscrossing paths? How can we write stories that reflect the messy, intertwined reality of living inside an ecosystem along with many other species?" *Sophie Strand, The Flowering Wand (2022)*

.. the ferns were the first great trees of earth ..
to glorious heights they grew
now ...
in quiet peaceful glens
they've earned their right to solitude
Gwen Frostic, A Place on Earth (1967)

Prioritization of stores in a mall, with examples:

No 1. "Hot Spots": Bakery, Fruit Juices, Five & Ten Cent Store, Millinery • No.2 Locations: Athletic Goods Store, Corset Shop, Delicatessen, Telegraph Office • No. 3 Locations: Electric Repair Shop, Ladies' Tailor, Mortgage Loan Office, Transient Hotel • No. 4 Locations (Farthest From High Foot Traffic): Bowling Alley, Chicken Dinner Eating Places, Carbonated Water Firms, Oil Burner Shop • Miscellaneous: X-Ray Laboratories, Public Accountants. *The Community Builders' Handbook (1947)*

"We built this city / This kickass city / What kind of music / Built this city?"
Homer Simpson, Kill the Alligator and Run (2000)

"Rock and roll." *Lisa Simpson, wearily (2000)*

"If you decide before you walk into a room that whoever's in there will like you, they will—and they'll be thrilled you have relieved them of the burden of having to decide whether to like you. **It's like a little gift.**" *Elle Reeve, Black Pill (2024)*

"A well-developed sense of humor is the pole that adds balance to your steps as you walk the tight-rope of life." *William Arthur Ward*

"I learned that if you loved something, you didn't have to enact the toxic, masculine principle of destroying the object of your obsession. You could study it, nurture it. You could let your love of Moby Dick turn you into a marine biologist, not a harpooner of beautiful creatures." *Neko Case, The Harder I Fight The More I Love You (2025)*

"They were losing their body wisdom, their moon wisdom, their mountain wisdom, they were trading the live wood of the maypole for the dead carpentry of the cross. They weren't as much fun anymore...they were straining so desperately for admission to paradise that they had forgotten that paradise had always been their address." *Tom Robbins, Jitterbug Perfume (1984)*

The Michael Character (and 3 other bands!) are playing Deep Cuts in Medford on Saturday, April 12. *Doors @ 7pm & music @ 8pm.*

SPARKS AND RECS

Ideas to spark joy. From the stars to your springtime, via guest psychic Georgina Nightshade.



ARIES (March 21 - April 19): Spring is a time of new life. Just as fresh green buds unfurl on a seasoned tree, there is perennial vegetation within you, that is ready to reemerge after dormancy. This is a time to honor your past self. What is something you made or accomplished, but it never got a proper celebration? Time to revisit it, and bring the acknowledgement it deserves. Rise a glass to the past!

TAURUS (April 20 - May 20): Imagine a time you were travelling, and found yourself wandering down cobblestoned hypotheticals, imagining "what if I lived here"? You know that feeling. Cut to now: each passing moment of your life is a thread in the tapestry of someone else's "what if." Because Taurus: you *do* live here. This spring, write a postcard to a friend who does not live here. Tell them some detail about your day.



GEMINI (May 21 - June 20): The idea here is for me to give you recommendations, but Gemini: you and I both know that your taste is exquisite. You're the one who should be giving recs! Make a playlist for someone you're getting to know, or write a google review for your favorite restaurant (apparently that really helps them). Host a movie night to make all your friends watch something you adore. They'll thank you later.

CANCER (June 21 - July 22): Things that used to bring you joy have started to feel stale. Don't despair. It just means that this spring you need to introduce some friction into your preferences. The moon goes through phases, and so can you! Not sure where to start? At your local indie bookstore, look for a staff pick in a genre you usually don't go for. Or better yet, ask your favorite Gemini for a rec!



LEO (July 23 - August 22): There is growth to do, changes to make, work to be done. You can feel it, Leo! Something else you might feel is ill-equipped for the immensity of the future. But you are capable. You are good. And good things take time. This spring, it all starts with finding luxury in the process of preparation. Drink coffee out of your favorite mug every single morning. Purposefully over-estimate your ETA. When cooking, use a lovely bowl to collect food scraps. On errand day, wear your favorite underwear or heck, go commando!

VIRGO (*August 23 - September 22*): If anyone can plan for randomness, it's you. In fact, you must! This spring it's time to rewild your routine. Listening to local radio is a great place to start. You might check out 91.5 WMFO on Wednesday nights from 9pm-12am for live performances from local bands.



LIBRA (*September 23 - October 22*): You are fortunate to have many choices available to you in your life. But let's be honest, choosing can be exhausting. This spring, take respite in choices that are made for you (and not by an algorithm either). Treat yourself to a restaurant that doesn't need a menu, such as ordering whatever the weekly special is at Flatbread Pizza, or enjoying a bowl of ramen at Yume Wo Katare.



SCORPIO (*October 23 - November 21*): What does victory feel like? I mean physically, tactically. This spring, make an investment an achievable, tangible success. Put needle to thread so that you'll be able to run your fingers over a piece of embroidery. Get a cactus so that it can poke you later and remind you that you kept it alive all this time. Or — wild suggestion here — submit something to a little magazine so that you can see your creation in print.



SAGITTARIUS (*November 22 - December 21*): Your assumptions have been building up, and Sag my friend? It's time for a spring clean. Your springtime mantra is "but why?" Ask for explanation of the thing you don't quite understand, rather than nodding along to it. Identify something you have been obeying by default, and try rebelling against it! (Also go get wine from Rebel Rebel in Bow Market.)

CAPRICORN (*December 22 - January 19*): You're on the verge of intellectual breakthrough, but your intellect can only make the connections, and right now it needs a few more dots to connect. Try this. Go for a walk with no company, no headphones, just you, your powers of observation, and a mission. Your mission is to discover a sentence made out of "found footage" — you might gather a verb from a bumper sticker, a name from a street sign, or a noun you see three of. Write the sentence down when you get home.



AQUARIUS (*January 20 - February 18*): While I applaud everything that it took for you to get here, I'm afraid your work is not done. Don't give up now! What lies ahead is precisely what you have been building momentum for. You've come so far already. Keep rocking, keep rolling, this spring is not the time to gather moss. (Except literal moss, which is fair game. Start a terrarium.)

PISCES (*February 19 - March 20*): That question that's been bugging you? Be bugged. If you're haunted by the saying "if you have to ask, you'll never know," then forget about knowing, and let asking be the goal. Ask your journal; ask your mother; ask the stars. Ask a reference librarian. Ask yourself how many ways you can ask this question. Ask about who was asking it before you were born, and who will ask it after you're gone.



A SPARK LOST IN TRANSLATION

by Sami Vesakoivu

sanat sivuilla
sivuavat vain

words on pages
are but tangents

ei musteeni muista
mitään

my ink remembers
nothing

se muistuttaa,
eivätkä kirjainten koreat kaaret
keskenään keskustele,
ei,

it only reminds
nor have letters' fine archs
any conversation,

ne kiertelevät vain
keskustaa

no,
they in circles wander
around the centre

sitä sanatonta tulta,
tähтиахоissa taottua,
jonka
sinuun katsoessani
tiedän,
josta kynäni
ei koskaan ole kuullutkaan

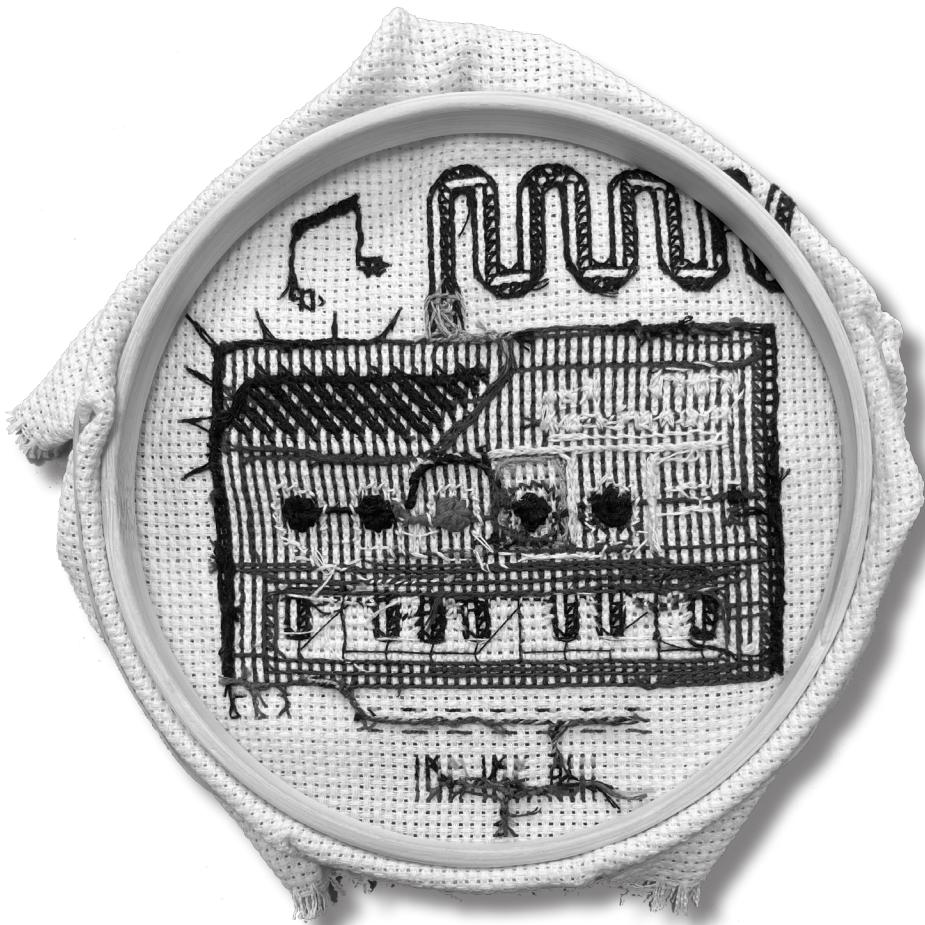
that unspoken spark
forged in star-hearths
which
in looking into you
I know
but of which
my pen has never heard

sanat sivuilla
sivuavat vain

words on pages
are but tangents

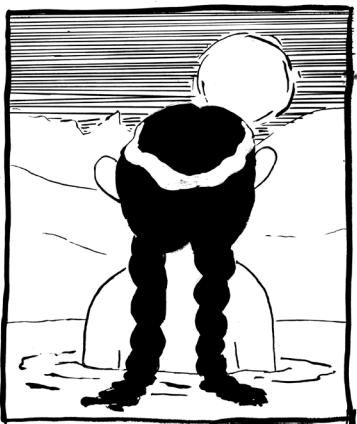


KORG MONOTRON DUO CROSS STITCH by Kurt James Werner (cont. on page 8)



BODY OF WATER

by Tif Bucknor



IT WAS A COOL DAY in early spring when we first saw her.

It had rained the night before, making the air sweet and dewy when we awoke at dawn. After quick breakfasts and kisses goodbye from our parents, we raced down to the lake.

There she was.

She sang a song in a language I had never heard before and have never heard since. The tune sounded like honeycombs or the beat of a butterfly's wings, or wild berries. I can still hear it in my dreams though I've never been able to reproduce it in my waking life. We called her Lily.

<Oh>

<Hello my little flowers.>

<Will you come play?>

We stayed in the water until our shadows grew long and the glorious cool breeze of the morning gave way to a chilly even wind.

<You better head home, little flowers.>

She insisted we leave before the sun set.

<Please come visit me tomorrow, little flowers!>

She began to sing her song again but this time the fluttering butterflies twisted into spastic, thrashing moths.

I thought I saw a tear roll down her cheek.

The sun setting behind us, we raced home as fast as we could to tell our parents what we had witnessed. Their responses confused us.

"Is she back already?" They'd say over supper.

"I do hope she stays for a bit longer" They'd say tucking us into bed.

"Get some sleep, she'll be there tomorrow." They'd say turning out the lights.

And sure enough...

There she was the next day singing her song of cattails and daffodils.

<My flowers have returned to me!>

The next day and the next day and the next, were filled with laughter and play and song. Every morning the whole town went down to the lake and every evening she would send us off at sunset with kisses and promises of more fun tomorrow. Always she would resume her song as we left, and always the notes would feel just a touch sourer than they had been that morning. Overtime, her notes had turned from honeycombs and wings, and berries to mugwort and fallen leaves and dark bark.

"Any day now." They'd say over supper.

"I knew she wouldn't stay for long." They'd say tucking us into bed.

"Rise early tomorrow, she won't be here for much longer." They'd say turning out the lights.

At night we could hear her cry out to the moon.

We rose early the next day to greet our lady. Her song had turned to sour fruit and coyote howls and yew.

<Not today little flowers.>

<I'm so tired, please run along now. We'll play again tomorrow, I promise>

The next day the lake was empty.

"That's just her way." They'd say over supper.

"Her visit was longer than I thought it'd be." They'd say tucking us into bed.

"Rest easy, little flowers, she'll be back soon." They'd say turning out the lights.

And from that night and every night since we'd go to bed and dream of honeycombs and the beat of butterfly and moth's wings and cattails and daffodils and wild berries and mugwort and fallen leaves and dark bark and sour fruit and coyote howls and yew. And we'd wait for our flower to return to us. •



PARANORMAL ACTIVITY

A FIRSTHAND GUIDE TO MA'S HAUNTED TRIANGLE

BY JOHN LAPSLY

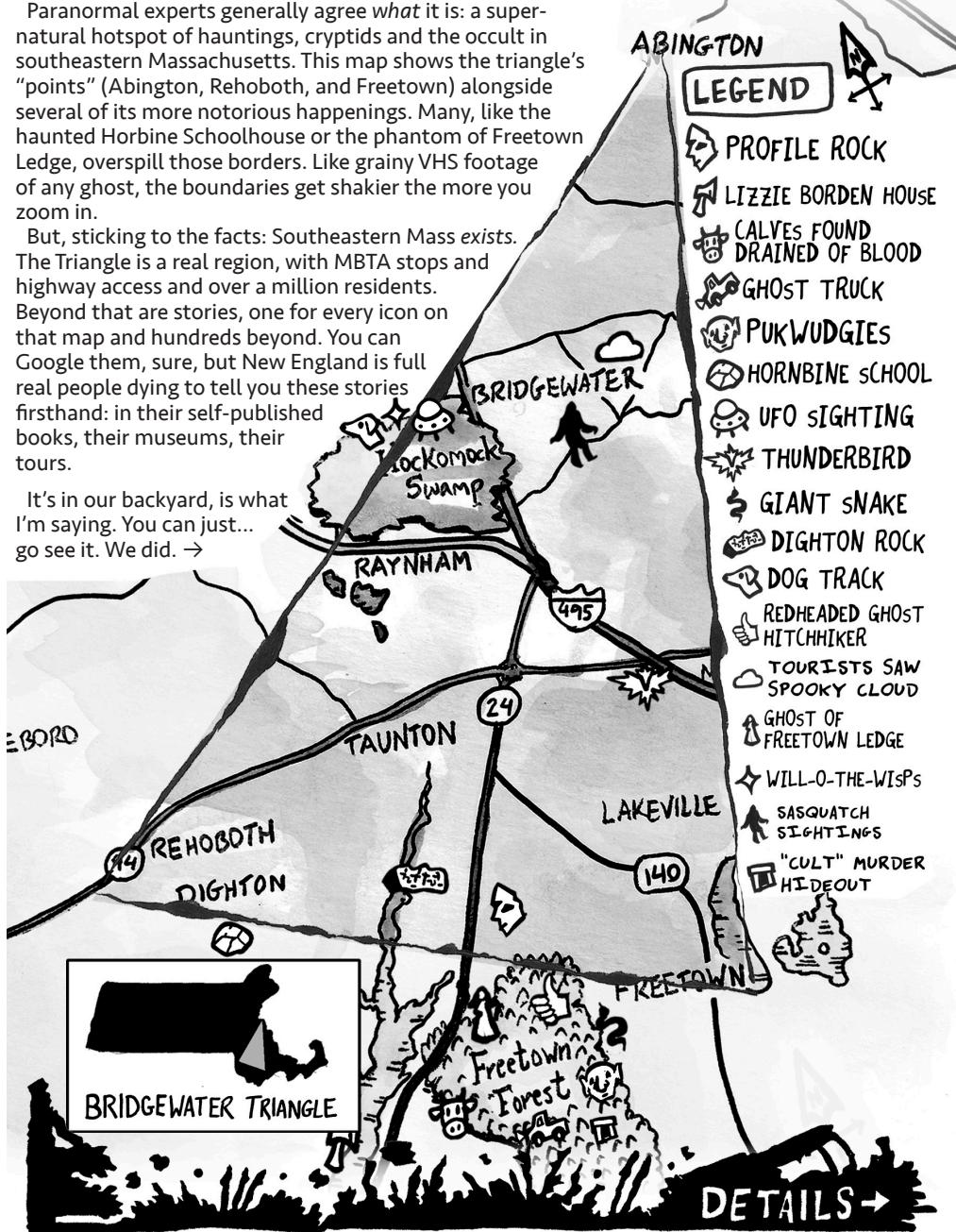
THERE'S DISAGREEMENT ON WHERE, precisely, the Bridgewater Triangle is.

Paranormal experts generally agree what it is: a supernatural hotspot of hauntings, cryptids and the occult in southeastern Massachusetts. This map shows the triangle's "points" (Abington, Rehoboth, and Freetown) alongside several of its more notorious happenings. Many, like the haunted Horbine Schoolhouse or the phantom of Freetown Ledge, overspill those borders. Like grainy VHS footage of any ghost, the boundaries get shakier the more you zoom in.

But, sticking to the facts: Southeastern Mass exists. The Triangle is a real region, with MBTA stops and highway access and over a million residents.

Beyond that are stories, one for every icon on that map and hundreds beyond. You can Google them, sure, but New England is full real people dying to tell you these stories firsthand: in their self-published books, their museums, their tours.

It's in our backyard, is what I'm saying. You can just... go see it. We did. →



HOCKOMOCK SWAMP

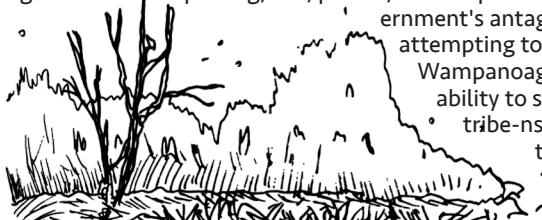
We never got deep enough into the Hockomock Swamp to escape the roar of the freeways, but this notoriously-haunted chunk of the Bridgewater Triangle used to be isolated, sacred wilderness. The Hockomock is named for the Wampanoag deity of death, and served for centuries as both hunting and burying ground.

Most 1980s horror movies will disagree with me, but I don't think "Indian burial ground" should necessarily be shorthand for "haunted". Smarter people than me have proposed that the Goosebumps-ification of Native burial sites serves as a colonizers' guilt reflex: a schlocky ghost story gets to conveniently sidestep the question of "okay but how did all of those Indians end up dead?" My personal belief, backed by a very sketchy understanding of biology, is that natural things absorb the trauma they've witnessed in ways that can't always be measured. So: let's talk about what the Swamp has seen.

The Hockomock served as a Native American base of operations during King Philip's War, one of the last and deadliest conflicts in pre-Revolution America. The bloody multi-year conflict erupted in 1675 after decades of colonial encroachment and broken agreements. By 1678, thousands of Native Americans had been killed, hundreds more enslaved, and the last meaningful resistance to European colonization had been crushed. Anawan Rock, farther south in the Triangle, is named for the war's brutal final act: Pocasset war chief Anawan surrendered and, despite promises of mercy, was promptly executed.

So: haunted? I would fucking think so. Maybe you think that this manifests as wailing voices or floating apparitions, but my thinking is a bit more practical: a swamp is a complex biome with centuries-old defense mechanisms against invaders and disease. A swamp that's witnessed as much bloodshed and cruelty as the Hockomock has might take a rather dim view of the bipeds who caused all that misery.

Nevertheless: the swamp teems with life. Stand still long enough and grasshoppers resume their arcs around your boots, bees drift lazily between the vines, and the mud exhales clouds of gnats. The Wampanoag, too, persist, in Mashpee and Gay Head, as does the federal government's antagonism: as recently as 2020, the US was attempting to claw back over 300 acres of Mashpee Wampanoag reservation and revoke the tribe's ability to self-govern. See mashpeewampanoag-tribe-nsn.gov for more information and ways to support the tribe.



FREETOWN/FALL RIVER STATE FOREST

Freetown-Fall River State Forest anchors the Bridgewater Triangle's southern edge and has hosted a set of more modern horrors: a series of murders and abductions throughout the twentieth century. Most notorious is the 1978 killing of Mary Lou Arruda; second may be a series of 1979 murders in neighboring Fall River. The group responsible for the Fall River killings was alleged to be a Satanic cult, and the murders catalyzed the Satanic Panic of the 1980s. Despite scant evidence that these were, in fact, occult murders, law enforcement and the media have tended to throw all of the Forest's assaults, shootings, and even deaths-by-misadventure into a nebulous "devil-worship" bucket.

This is too small a space for the large grain of salt with which you need to take "Satanic" connections in 1980s America. Suffice it to say - much as I hate to profile an entire forest - devil or no devil, the Forest seems inclined to crime. Not only are these woods enormous, they're so dense that visibility is almost nil: weeds braid roots braid vines in tightly-packed,



neck-high underbrush. We'd entered with halfhearted notions of tracking down two of the Forest's abandoned "cult" hideouts (below is the artist's-recreation from my notes), but if I'd strayed ten feet off that path, they'd have stopped looking for me by now.

So yes, there might be something intrinsically occult about the Forest, but also... it might just be a good place to hide a body? I'm reminded of the toxic muck of Brooklyn's Gowanus Canal or the lonely expanse of New Jersey's Pine Barrens, two naturally-occurring cloaks within driving distance of cities with mob history. What comes first: the bodies themselves, or the reputation for being a great place to hide one?

It's admittedly more difficult to blame the mob for the wide range of cryptids spotted in the Forest over the years. Civilian Conservation Corps workers reported massive sewer-pipe-sized pythons in the 1930s. Both Wampanoag lore and scattered firsthand accounts in nearby towns describe mischievous elf-like creatures known as Pukwudgies, who are said to shove you off Freetown Ledge if you're not paying attention.



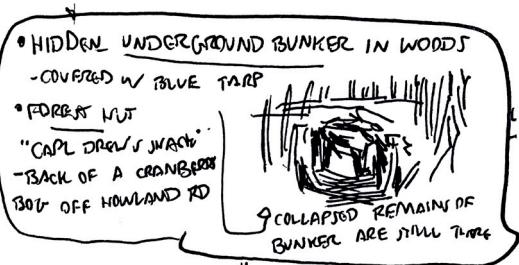
Steve Sbraccia holds a model of the UFO he saw

night, you might see will-o-the-wisps, orbs of light that dance around the abandoned railway behind the track. Arguably, though, the most famous paranormal visitor to Raynham was the battleship-sized home-plate-shaped UFO that WHDH reporters Jerry Lopes and Steve Sbraccia reported witnessing in 1979.

There is not room in this story, or this magazine, for every thinly-sourced sighting within the Bridgewater Triangle. I bring up the Raynham UFO mainly as a segue into my favorite denizens of the Bridgewater Triangle: the witnesses.

THE FAITHFUL

To me, the most compelling case for a paranormal incident is often the person telling the story. Some of us see something weird and it becomes, at most, a party anecdote. Others have a brush with the paranormal and it fundamentally transfigures their life. The Bridgewater Triangle has no shortage of evangelists in the latter category.



RAYNHAM-TAUNTON DOG TRACK

My notes for our trip include the phrase "Dog racing: real?" I started watching The Simpsons too young to get most of the jokes, so I have to be honest: when they rescue their family dog from a greyhound track, I thought they invented "dog racing" as a one-off gag. I still don't fully understand it (who rides the dogs? Pukwudgies?) but no matter, it's been outlawed in Massachusetts since 2010, and the Raynham-Taunton Greyhound Park has been closed since around then.

So: dog racing is the one thing you probably won't see at the abandoned dog track surrounded on all sides by the Hockomock Swamp. If you visit at

notes. The background features a decorative border of stylized plants and stars at the bottom of the page.

NOTES →

One could argue that these champions of Triangle lore are out to make a quick buck, or mentally unwell, but that's not my argument: for one, I don't know a lot of billionaire ghost hunters, and my, uh, "house is too glass" to make calls on anyone else's mental health. I'm really just here to remind you: these are your neighbors, and they **love** talking about this stuff. So just ask them:

- **Loren Coleman:** Coleman coined the "Bridgewater Triangle" name and currently runs the International Cryptozoology Museum in Portland, Maine. It's a short walk from the Amtrak station, \$10 admission.
- **Joseph DeAndrade:** founder of the Bridgewater Triangle Expedition Team (BTET) and Paranormal Investigation Organization (PIO), who traces his interest back to the moment he spotted a sasquatch in a frozen pond in Bridgewater. (I am not sure what to make of the detail that even in DeAndrade's own telling, the person right next to him saw no sasquatch.) DeAndrade's collection at the Bridgewater Library includes typewritten PIO & BTET newsletters as well as written submissions of weird sightings from other Triangle residents.
- **Mrs Swift's and Moore Antiques & Collectibles:** 16 W Union St, East Bridgewater, headquarters of the Massachusetts Area Paranormal Society. MAPS hosts half-day East Bridgewater ghost tours every autumn.

The 2012 documentary **The Bridgewater Triangle**, streaming on Amazon Prime, contains a lot of accounts that we couldn't find anywhere else online as well as some occasionally-alarming footage. One of the producers remarked that working on the documentary took him from "99 percent skeptic" of the Triangle's creepy happenings to "like a 96".

SO...DID WE SEE ANYTHING?

We spent most of a day in the Bridgewater Triangle, and I'm still not sure exactly what I was looking for. Frankly, reading over this piece so far, I'm embarrassed at how easily skepticism comes to me. Uncompromising cynicism seems as incurious and lazy to me as unquestioning belief.

Ultimately I think my approach to the supernatural is like the last year you believe in Santa Claus. You're getting old enough to understand what science is, and the improbability of a sleigh that can visit seven billion homes. Worse, you're becoming conscious of social pressures, and that people will give you funny looks when you talk about elves in the North Pole. It is becoming much, much easier not to believe.

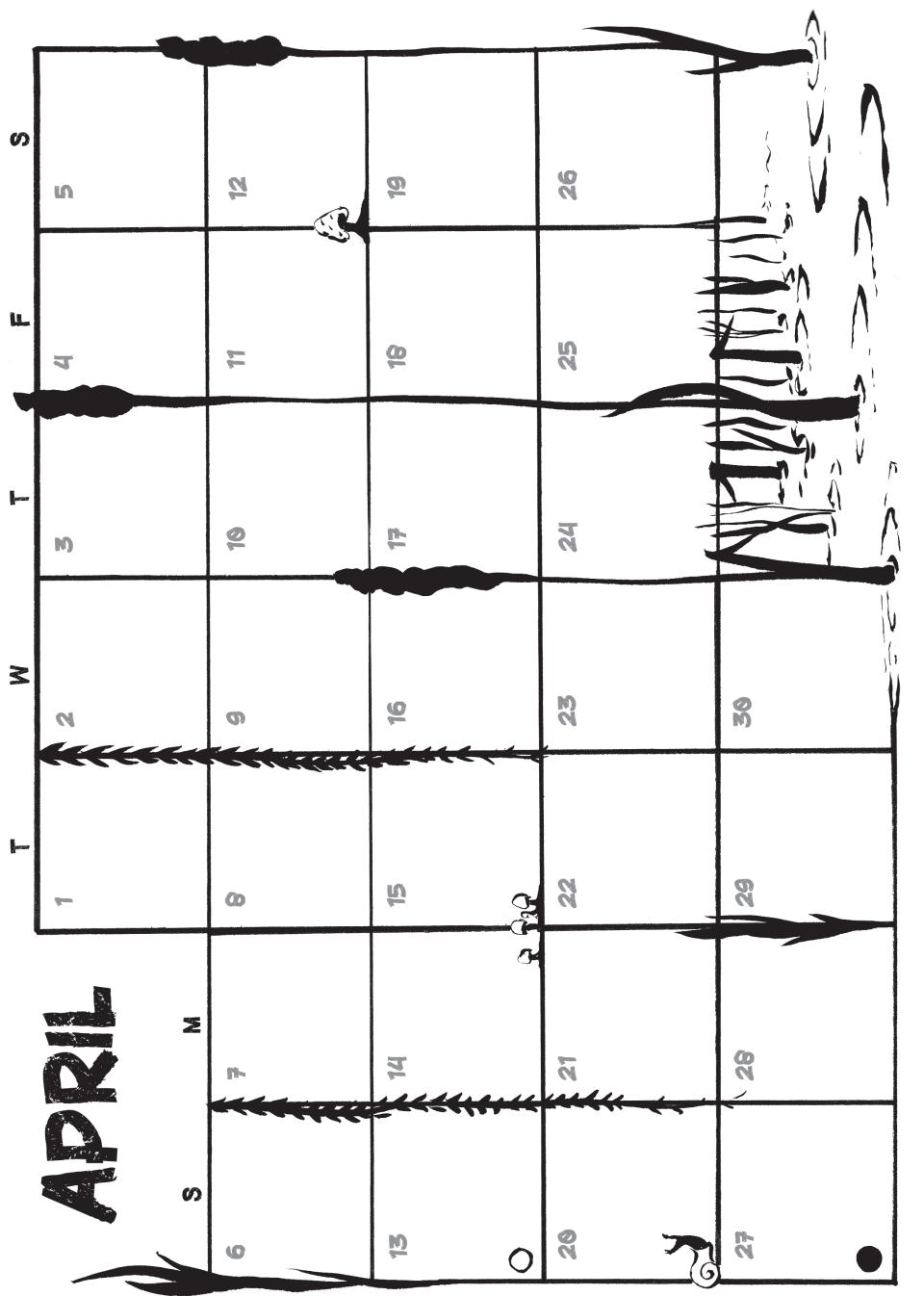
But. You're hanging on for just a little while longer, because the alternative—literally, magic!—is so much more awesome.



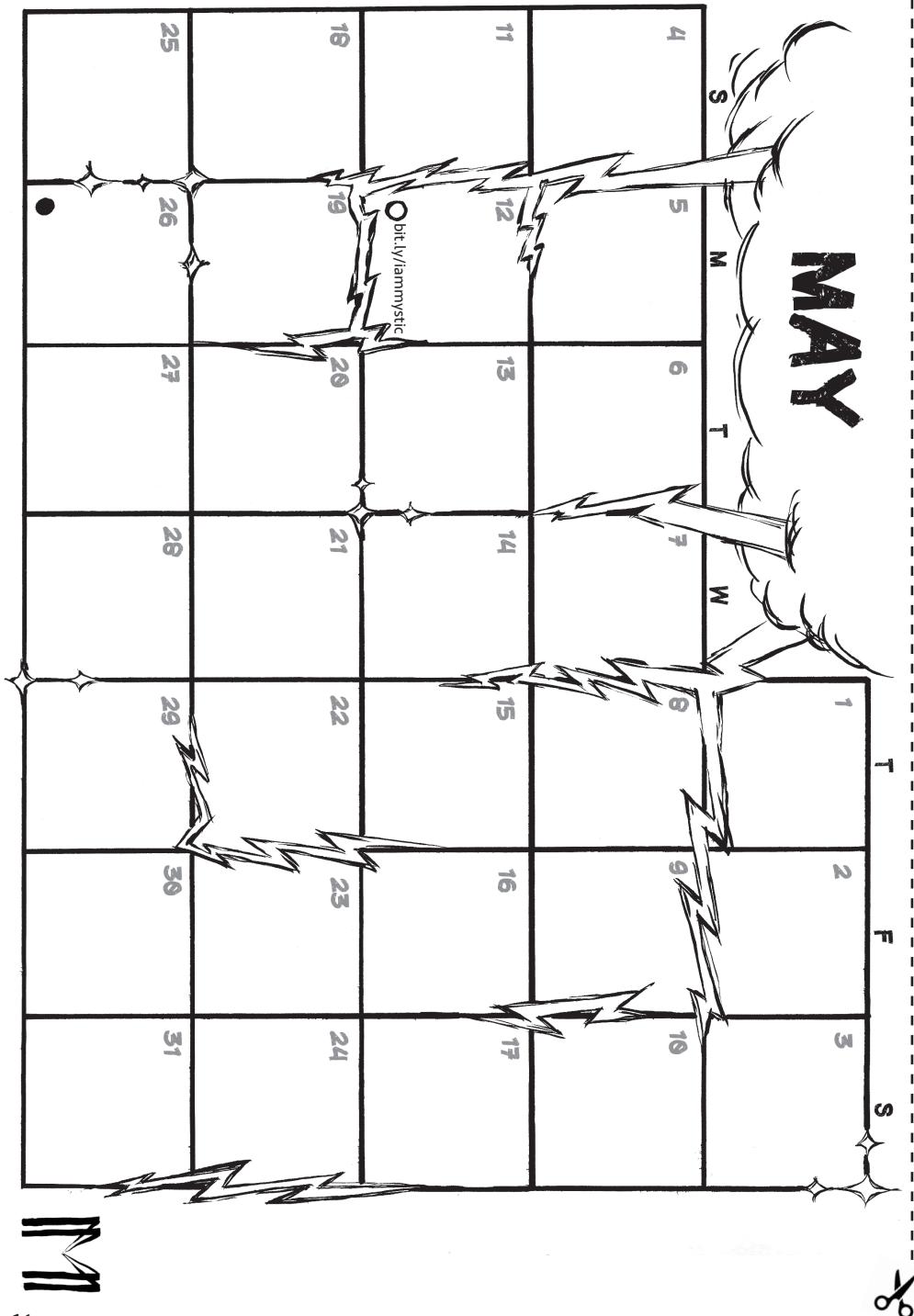
We had a gorgeous walk in that dense, cult-famous forest. Springtime's petals were unfurling and it was the kind of hike that begins in a scarf and ends in a T-shirt. And up on Assonet Ledge, we were transfixed by a genuine marvel, a phenomenon that seemed to defy everything I understand about light and physics. All three of us watched it for about ten minutes, trying to theorize how something was even possible. I'm sure there's a scientific explanation for what we saw, but I do not plan on Googling what it is. •

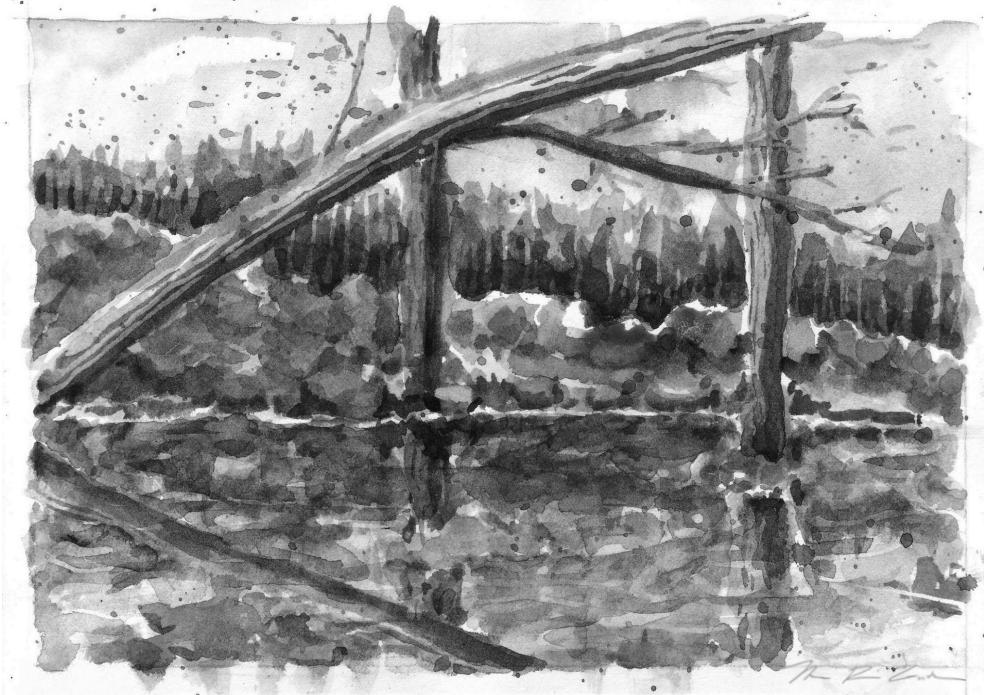


APRIL



MAY





above: SPONGY SWAMP by www.studiogh.com; opposite and previous: Aliza, @aliza.razell

FAIRY FIRE

from the lab of Ian Hoover

This drink has two parts which will be made separately and then mixed as part of the drinking experience. Part one is Flammable Gin, and part two is the mixer.

The Mixer:

- 1/2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1/2 Tbsp herbal liquor (e.g. Fontbonne)
- 1Tbsp St. Germain elderflower liquor

Flammable Gin:

- 1 oz Empress Indigo Gin
- 2 tsp high proof spirit (over 100 proof) layered on top of the gin

PRESENTATION:

In front of the drinker should be three glasses. One with the gin, one with the mixer and one with ice. Light the gin on fire and admire the pale blue flame. Before anything else catches on fire pour both parts over the ice in the third glass and give a quick stir to mix things together. Put out anything that's still on fire while enjoying your drink.



NOTES:

- Exact quantities are not important if the amount of mixer and gin are equal.
- Using Empress indigo gin is rather important for two reasons. The color change to pink when exposed to the acidity of the lemon juice really adds to the feeling of being a mad scientist when consuming this drink. Second, because it's darkly colored it's easy to see if you have achieved the layering of spirits required for flammability.
- 100 proof is the bare minimum for flammability. Higher proof will make it easier, but I would personally avoid anything you wouldn't want to drink (e.g. Everclear). To achieve layering it helps if the high proof spirit is warmer than the gin. Using a flat spoon, gently lower the spirit into the gin until the spoon is just below the surface than gently remove the spoon leaving the spirit in place. After achieving the layering wait 20 seconds for the vapors to accumulate. Using a long lighter expose the surface of the gin + spirit to flame until the it catches. To avoid setting your kitchen on fire it's recommended to try this first in a friend's kitchen.



THE MAGIC SWAMP by Cassis Brown, @cassisxbrown, @slight.chaos

What now? Winter is ending, but there is no spring in my step.

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 and look for the answer in next month's issue.

Dear Sky,

This long, cold winter has wrecked me, or maybe I was always this awful. A neighbor of mine fell on the ice, and I laughed. Not because it was startling or something—I heard myself, I sounded cruel. I don't have many friends, but one of them got a promotion and invited us out for a drink to celebrate. I spent the whole night imagining her boss seeing her in this drunken state and firing her on the spot for unprofessionalism. I've started baring my teeth at small animals. Like, squirrels. I feel like they deserve it.

I can hear myself. I know I need to snap out of it. Blah blah blah. I don't want to. Spring is coming. Daffodils and bunny rabbits make me want to hurl right now. What's the point?

-Crabby Asshole

Dear Asshole,

Look, you know and I know that there are plenty of tiny but mighty reasons to stay alive, and there are many annoying mental exercises a person can do to reacquaint themselves with those reasons, but you are sick of hearing that bullshit. There are plenty of bigger things you could try if they appealed — serious religion, depression meds, psilocybin, move to Spain, get an ugly dog you are forced to walk and feed — and you know all that too. You're an old hand at suffering. This pain of yours is old enough to drive. And you haven't been sitting on your ass about it, either. You've done the joyful daffodil thing, every fucking spring.

So, ok, I'm going to tell you a story. In my late teens, I had an eating disorder for a couple years and I really did not want to get better. Towards the end of it, I sat on the steps of a building at my college and filled a big sheet of notebook paper, front and back, with everything I loved about my beautiful eating disorder. It saved me so much money to skip meals. Denying myself made me feel powerful. I actually looked good in sundresses, for the first and only time. I loved having visible ribs and going over them every day like a rosary. It was spring, the quad was stupid green, and I felt like I was being asked to kill off a part of me I adored. I did not want to turn into a person who wanted to eat. Which is to say, I did not want to turn into a person who really wanted to live. It was all very romantic, and as far as dating was concerned, it ruled. Someone was always in love with in me.

I'm telling you this to paint the picture of a person who knew they were supposed to want to feel better and did not want to, for a lot of good reasons. The pain felt good. Pain feels good sometimes! We are fucked up monkeys cursed with souls and sometimes we want to hurt ourselves more than we want to keep living. And there wasn't some revelatory moment where I saw a lovely bird in the lovely trees and the beauty of life dazzled me into a hamburger. What happened was: I read my list of reasons not to eat, several times, and then I tore it up and ate the list.

It was messed up. Guts don't handle paper very well, especially when there's not much else in them. But it was just 1 page, and I didn't make a habit out of it. I just remember sitting on those steps, angrily chewing what was essentially wood pulp, and thinking: fucking fine, I guess. And then I proceeded to get better, but not with anything resembling grace. I was a real asshole about it.

You don't have to want to, you cranky motherfucker. You just have to do it. Go running in the sunshine. Do it every day. I don't care if you want to. Your brain is a little broken right now, so you need to stop listening so hard to its bullshit. Give yourself discipline, instead. Drink the water, eat the vegetables. Send your friend a congratulations card, and write down five things you actually remember liking about her. Stop beating yourself up for hating the squirrels and the flowers. They had it coming. Feel exactly as shitty as you feel, and get up in the morning to do the work anyway.

And hey, this misery will not last forever. You will remember how to love yourself again.

Feel exactly as shitty as you feel, and get up in the morning to do the work.

All the stars,
Sky

RARA AVIS

by Tif Bucknor

THEIR BARE FEET SQUELCHED as they poked around the mangrove forest. Mosquitos nipped at their exposed ankles. They had chased the strange figure all the way down to the water before they lost it.

"If I was The Rara Avis" pondered Lucky. "Where would I be?"

Julien rolled her eyes. "It wasn't the Rara Avis. It was probably just a boring, normal bird from this boring normal swamp."

Just then, the ground began to shake as the Julien fell from the root she had been standing on just in time to see a giant finger stretch out of the water. She blinked her eyes in amazement. They hadn't been standing on roots at all.

"Amazing!"

The girls wove in and out Giants' hands. They watched as their gnarled knuckles clawed at the ground. Their fingertips shriveled and pruned from hundreds of years in the brackish water.

"Rara Avis" they called "where are you?!"

"Excuse me!" Lucky addressed the giants. "We are looking for the Rara Avis. Do you know which way he went?" The wind rushed through the forest. The giants inhaled deeply and pointed one twisted finger across to the other bank.

"Thank you!"

The girls waded in the shallow water all the way to the opposite shore. They walked deep into forest. Until they heard...

Zweeee zweeee zweeeeeet

Julien covered her ears "I can't hear myself think with all this racket."

"No not racket!" said Lucky "Music! Follow me!"

The girls burst into the clearing to see The Marvelous Cicada Symphony tuning up their instruments for the Bug Ballet.

"Cool!" Lucky exclaimed before getting harshly shushed. The girls were escorted to some empty seats as the show began.

The ballet was riveting; A beautiful piece about a moth who thought herself to be a butterfly.

She asked the bug beside her if they could point her towards the Rara Avis.

"Certainly, he lives deeper still into the forest. Where the earth opens."

Julien made to ask for clarification but Act II was starting so the girls took their leave and wandered deeper into the forest.

"Where the earth opens." Lucky pondered out loud after what felt like hours of walking. "What does that mean?" The sun was sinking lazily in the sky making their shadows grow longer and longer behind them.

"I don't know." Said Julien. "Maybe we should turn back. That bug seemed confused. Or...maybe I am confused this is all starting to feel like a weird dream. I feel like we are in a normal boring forest again"

"Maybe it's a metaphor for-" Lucky felt herself falling through the air. Her sister catching her moments before she fell clean off the precipice.

"A sinkhole." said Lucky

"Where the earth opens," said Julien

"A mouth," said another voice.

The voice sounded muffled like Lucky sounded when she'd try to talk after stuffing her cheeks with too much food.

The girls realized the voice was coming from the sinkhole itself.

"Hello." Said the girls.

"Hello." Said the mouth. "Are you looking for the Rara Avis?"

The girls nodded "Do you know where he is?"

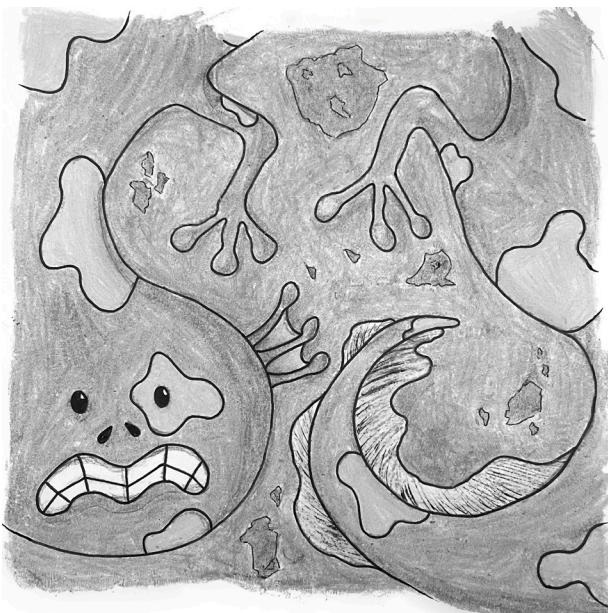
"Of course, I do. I am his nest. He brings his beautiful things to me."

Lucky nudged her sister. Stuck to the edge of the far side of the mouth was her ribbon. The girls skirted carefully around the rim and tried to pull the ribbon free. They didn't realize it was still held in its great and terrible beak.

The air crackled with static, shivers shot down the sisters' spines. There he was.

Rara Avis. •





COMBATING HOPELESSNESS

by Zoe Chakoian

THE EXISTENTIAL DREAD has been... strong, these days. It is the uncertainty of what the future will look like as our government is being torn apart, and grief about the irreversible change to our country that cannot be undone. When I feel hopeless, helpless, or listless, I try to remember two things:

- 1) We cannot make progress, much less keep the status quo, if we have already given up.**
- 2) There are things in my control.**

I have been putting my actions, and the actions of those around me, in the perspective of the “swiss cheese theory,” which I first

learned about in 2020. **The idea is that risk is lowered** — for the spread of disease, or in this case deterioration of our rights — **when we collectively work together**. Any one approach or action will have holes in it, like swiss cheese does when sliced, but when those slices layered together the gaps are covered by the various approaches and actions of others.

This is to say that not all of us will have the time, expertise, resources, or interest in the same things, but if all of us work at the same time in different layers, we can protect ourselves individually and communally. I think of the actions that I do as layers built from multiple spheres: Personal, communal, local, municipal, state, and federal.

To be sustained, your actions should not be ones that fill you with dread — if something does, make a different choice.

Some of these are everyday activities, some I have yet to do, but I am always thinking about what I can do *in addition* to. Many of these should be narrow — choose one public entity to focus on, or one bill to advocate for. Your list will look different depending on what you care about.

Personal: I can practice empathy in my interactions. I can choose to not obey in advance. I can stay informed. I can take care of myself, so as to be present for my community. I can make art. I can identify and articulate injustices when I encounter them in person. I can learn about my rights (e.g., voting rights, protest rights.)

Communal: I can check in with my friends, family, and neighbors. I can plan gatherings. I can share information, action items, and resources with others. I can contribute small acts of kindness to others' days. I can donate to mutual aid. I can write someone a letter. I can call emergency lines to report when I see ICE activity in my community. I can pick up trash, volunteer with an organization, or donate blood. I can encourage others to join me in actions.

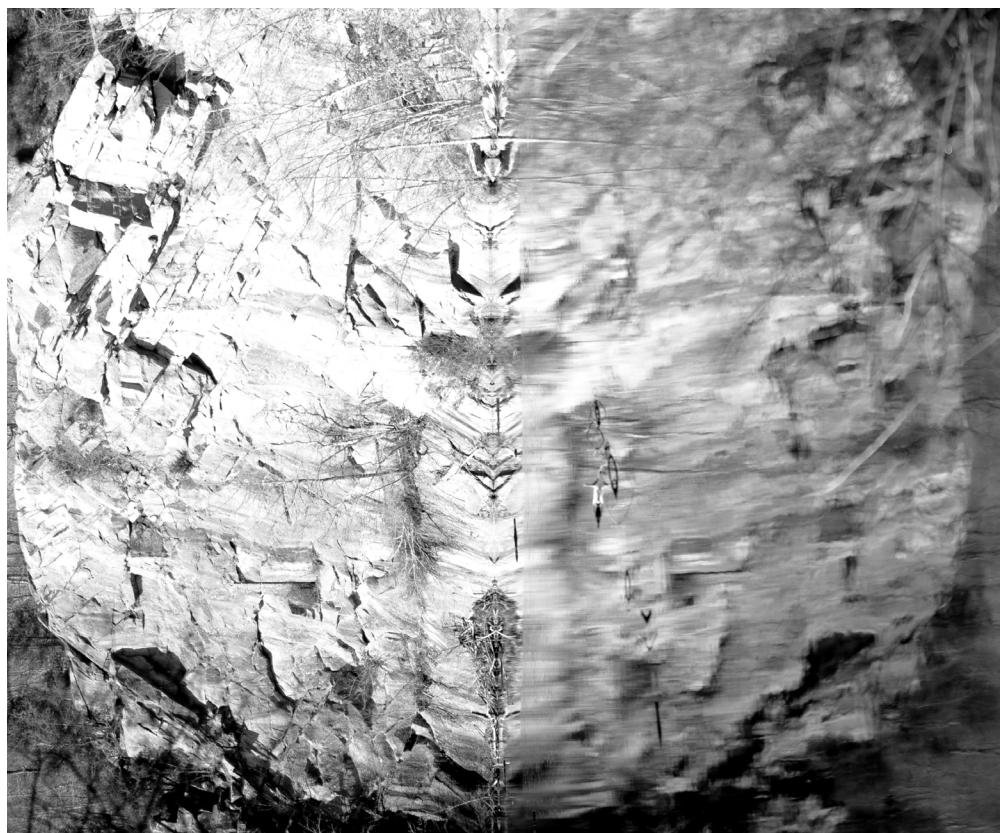
Local: I can support my local library (get a library card, and check things out! Even if you don't read them. Attend events. Become a friend of the library.) I can consume local news and media. I can ride or support public transit. I can visit local parks or nature. I can participate in or support local arts. I can attend events or donate to local organizations doing work I support. I can write a letter to the editor.

Municipal: I can attend city or town council, school committee, library board, or other municipal-level meetings. When I see an agenda item I am in support of or opposed to, I can contact members of that council, submit written testimony, or go in person and speak if they allow for public comment. *This is where a lot of important decisions are made, but not many people vote in these elections or pay attention to their actions.*

State: I can call or email my state legislators about issues or specific bills. I can contact my governor and attorney general and urge them to take specific actions. I can submit written testimony on bills, or testify in person. I can vote, write postcards to voters, work at the polls, or volunteer as a poll monitor with a local organization. I can attend town hall meetings. I can volunteer with or donate to organizations working at a state level.

Federal: I can call my legislators about issues or specific bills. I can attend town hall meetings, or try to meet with my legislators (or their staff) when they are in the state. I can vote. I can attend protests. I can volunteer with or donate to organizations working at a federal level.

Every time I have thoughtfully chosen an action, it has made me feel just a little bit less hopeless. Good, even, because to be sustained, your actions should not be ones that fill you with dread — if something does, make a different choice. And while I do not know what will happen in the next few weeks, much less the next few months or years, I have to believe I can make a difference in making it a better future. •



26 SOMEWHERE IN THE BRIDGEWATER TRIANGLE by Aliza



Slidge's End

clawhammer banjo (aDADe)

Kurt James Werner
January 2025

Part 2

Dm G

i aspo i ^

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 3

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Part 4

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 5

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Part 6

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 7

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Part 8

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 9

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Part 10

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 11

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Part 12

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 13

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Part 14

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 15

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Part 16

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 17

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Part 18

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 19

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Part 20

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 21

Dm C

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Part 22

Dm F

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Part 23

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Part 24

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Part 26

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Part 28

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Part 35

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Part 36

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Part 37

Dm C

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Part 38

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 39

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Part 40

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 41

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Part 42

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 43

Dm C

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Part 44

Dm F

i aspo i ^

Part 45

Dm C

i aspo i ^

Part 46

Dm F

i aspo i ^

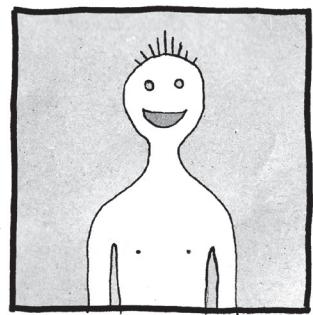
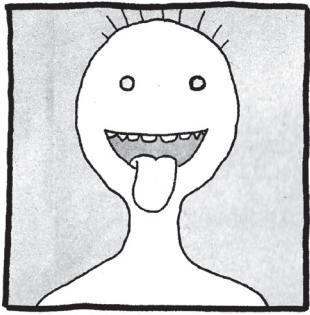
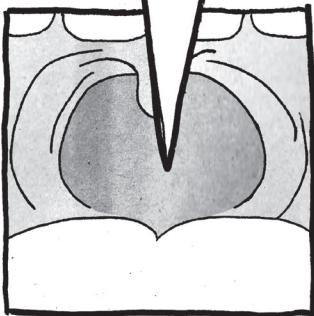
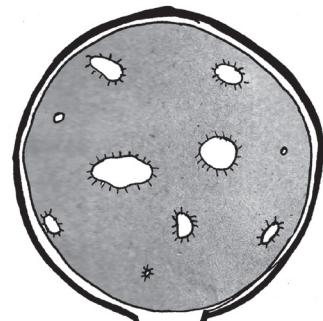
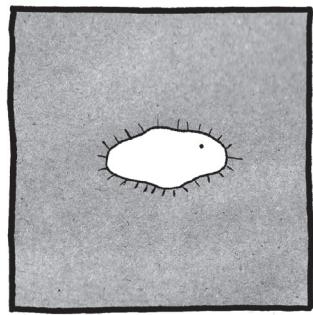
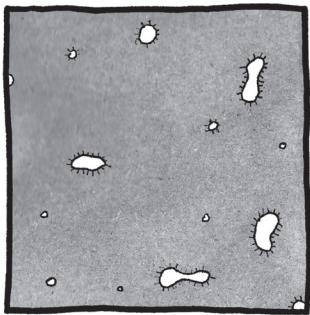
Part 47

Dm C

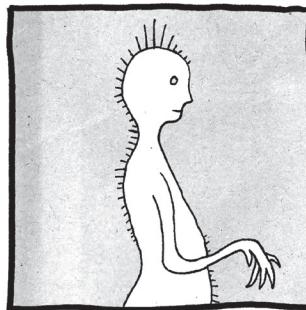
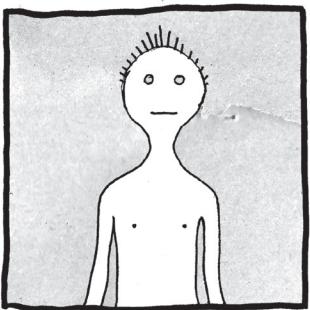
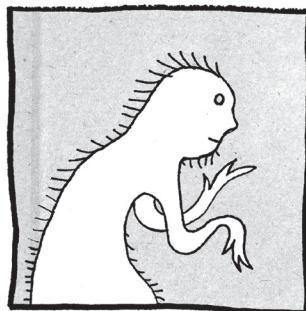
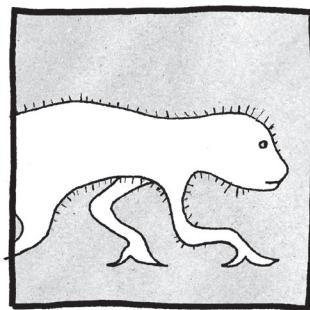
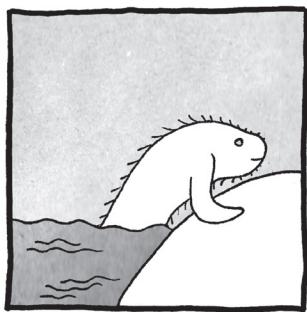
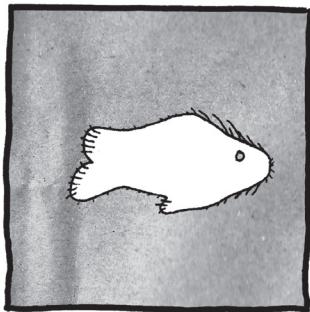
i aspo i ^

Part 48

<img alt="Banjo tablature for Part 48, measure 1. It shows a Dm chord followed by a F chord. The tablature uses a 6th string tuning (G, D, G, B, E). The 5th string has a 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 pattern. The 4th string has a

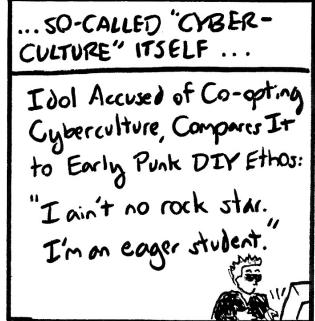
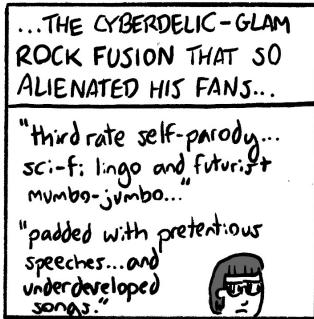
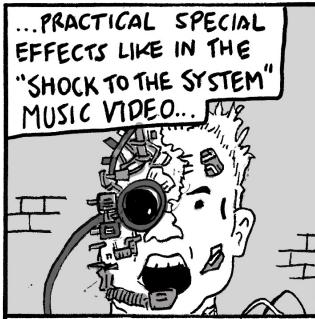
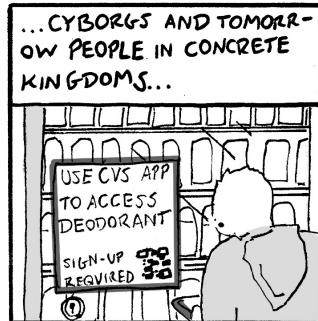
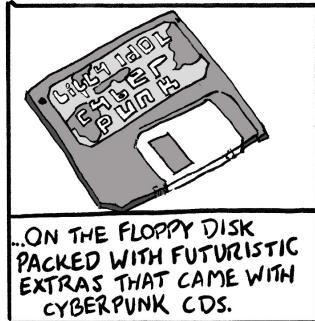
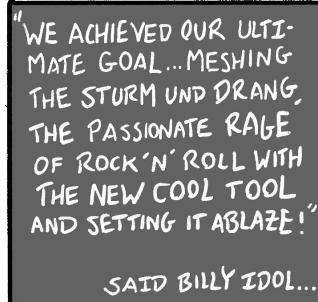
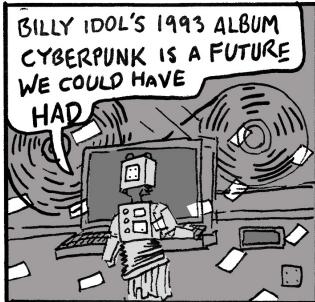


There is a short passage about microbes in Zoë Schlanger's *The Light Eaters*, which I experienced as an audio book so I don't have the direct quote to hand.



Still, the passage struck me such that I had to share it. So here's a paraphrase, which I am calling SPARK OF LIFE. If it strikes you, I hope you pass it on. - Aliza, @aliza.razell

CONTEXT CHRONICLE



Quotes are from actual reviews + Billy Idol's "I ain't no rock star" post in his own defense on WELL, an early online forum. I'm impressed how many people this album managed to piss off: Idol's hard-rock-era fans found it too conceptual and out-there, online cyberpunks derided him as an illiterate poseur, and in the years following *Nevermind*, listeners at large were uninterested in cyberdelic/dance-rock/post-punk fusion. Try "Heroin", "Love Labours On", "Wasteland", or drop some cushions, light a candle, and bliss out to "Adam In Chains".

John Lapsley, @norlock_art



A PUZZLE

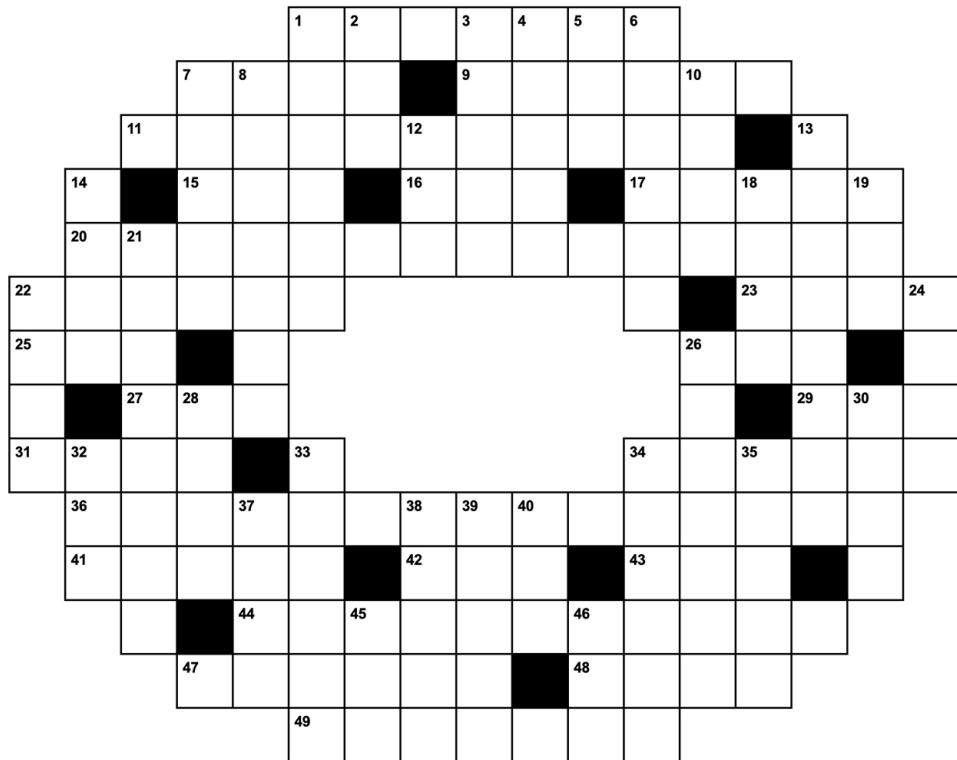
by Ben Tolkin

Forested wetland	-----
Post office purchase	-----
Powerful footfall	-----
Place to hang out in the city	-----
Ice cream serving	-----
Zip along	-----
"Ask away!"	-----
Emotionally jarred	-----
Something that emotionally jars you	-----
Simple home, like those on Cape Cod beaches	-----
Scary sight off of Cape Cod beaches	-----
Tiny ember, or moment of inspiration	-----

ANSWERS: SWAMP, STAMP, STOMP, STOOP, SCOOP, SCOOT, SHOOT,
SHOOK, SHOCK, SHACK, SHARK, SPARK

SLOSHWORD PUZZLE

Swamp and Spark edition bagel crossword By Carrington House



ACROSS

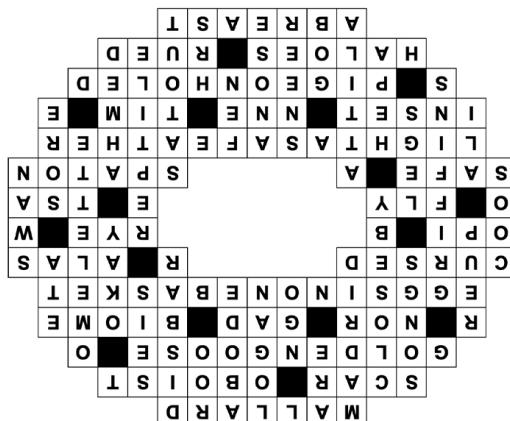
- 1 Gromit's mode of transport
- 7 "bed ___", per famous Carpenter
- 9 Once in a blue moon
- 11 Non-conformists at an open bar?
- 15 Small pup utterance
- 16 Egg opener?
- 17 Had a row?
- 20 Double shot cocktail
- 22 Barley for whiskey
- 23 Quattro ringed auto maker
- 25 Bordeaux toasting time?
- 26 Phở origin, in short
- 27 Pub orders, abbrv.
- 29 Prior to famous wine-producing carpenter
- 31 The Next Generation android
- 34 Toast topper
- 36 Dancing rooster mixers
- 41 What follows before
- 42 Very in 47A
- 43 How the classics get when they have a drink?
- 44 Into dancing? Reorder this cocktail
- 47 Origen de la sangría
- 48 Embarrassed white wine
- 49 James Bond AGHAST as his bartender does
THIS to his gin

DOWN

- 1 What a spilt drink did
- 2 Speedy web chats
- 3 "Wicked" star Cynthia
- 4 Billiards ricochet shot
- 5 NPR Shapiro
- 6 Parting shot
- 7 Remains to be seen here
- 8 She'll get what's coming to her
- 10 Take this before the bar
- 12 Texting insult
- 13 Change order
- 14 Nifty room-temperature beverage
- 18 Smallest state's substance support group
- 19 A done do
- 21 Cured, overnight
- 22 Leave your honey for this?
- 24 On the rocks
- 26 Bibulous square drink companions
- 28 Sensitivity in approach
- 30 This can hold its liquor
- 32 Obama's signature legislation
- 33 Very strong drink does this to paint, maybe
- 34 Watering hole
- 35 Bow repair
- 37 Tap these
- 38 SZA's middle name
- 39 Moonshine origin?
- 40 South AU airport
- 45 King Cole
- 46 Pod prefix

BIRD IS THE WORD

Answers for previous *Vulture* and *Phoenix* edition seeded bagel crossword By Carrie Ington House



THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

<i>pp</i>	<i>title</i>	<i>contributor</i>
2	Green Livery	Cynthia Wong
4	Sparks and Recs	Georgina Nightshade
6	A Spark Lost in Translation	Sami Vesakoivu
7	Korg Monotron Duo Cross Stitch	Kurt James Werner, kurt.james.werner@gmail.com
9	Body of Water	Tif Bucknor, @tif_withonef
10	Crossing the Swamp	Will Reber, @williamreber
11	Paranahmal Activity	John Lapsley, @norlock_art
15	Tear-out Calendar	Aliza Razell, @alizarazell
17	Spongy Swamp	www.studiogh.com
18	Fairy Fire	Ian Hoover
19	The Magic Swamp	Cassis Brown, @cassisxbrown, @slight.chaos
20	Dear Sky	all.the.stars.in.the@gmail.com
22	Rara Avis	Tif Bucknor, @tif_withonef
23	Untitled	Hayley St. Germain
24	Combating Hopelessness	Zoe Chakopian
24	Salamap (inset)	PisPis
26	Somewhere in the Bridgewater...	Aliza Razell, @alizarazell
27	Fire	@benignmischief
28	Slidge's End	Kurt James Werner, kurt.james.werner@gmail.com
30	Spark of Life	Aliza Razell, @alizarazell
32	Context Chronicle	John Lapsley, @norlock_art
33	A Puzzle	Ben Tolkin
34	Sloshword Puzzle	Carrington House

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Mar 28 2025

See mysticmoneymaker.com for previous issues:

1. Trick or Treat (Nov 2024)
2. Ice & Soot (Dec-Jan 2025)
3. Vulture & Phoenix (Feb 2025)
4. Swamp & Spark (Mar-Apr 2025)

