



The Spectatorial: Pagurian Summer

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STAFF AND CONTRIBUTORS

Executive

Editor-in-Chief Jeanne Polochansky

Creative Director Katherine Zheng

Editors

Senior Editor Andy Liang

Senior Editor Nathalia Ortiz Rios

Senior Editor Jacky Yu

Junior Editor Eugene Kim

Junior Editor Katarina Kojic

A Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear readers of *The Spectatorial*, new and old,

Do you know what goes on in the private affairs of a hermit crab?

What occurs beneath the ground it's on, past the sky above it, when no one is looking? While summertime arrives with the sound of cicadas and the stickiness of hot weather, it also beckons pondering about all things hidden, shadowed, not-of-the-outside.

The contributors of this debut zine are simultaneously its masthead. Through the interim weeks, they have outpoured their writing, illustrating, and editing skills into a bite-sized version of a typical volume in order to hone and showcase their creative foci. They have taken new approaches to their work and attempted unfamiliar perspectives to curate a selection of prose, poetry, and visual art that is sure to immerse even the most devout realists.

I hope you will join us in basking under the sun of speculation, where nothing, and everything, is real.

Jeanne Polochansky
Editor-in-Chief

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Poetry

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Andy Liang

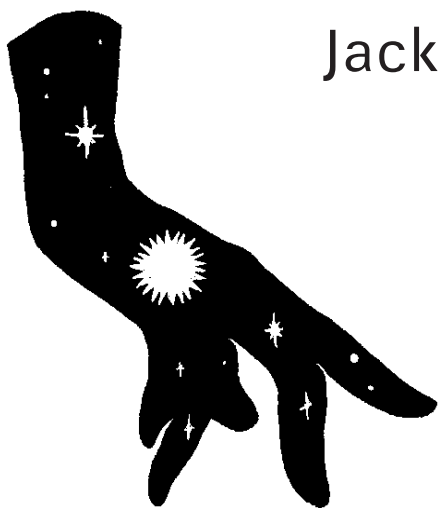


The kitchen whirled
The scalding breath, stirred
The pungent sauce, sizzled
In the rust-flaked pan, burnt.
And then the stump of a cough
Corked and twisted,
Stretched the hooked feet
With a clatter of images;
The light broke
With an apparition
Of traffic--
The shades sheathed in shades.

One must devise the ways
To trail down the street
Leading... leading...
The ground is not ephemeral
The rocks are not soft,
Waiting
At the intersection where shadows meet.
The heat drizzles,
Lifts
The shadows
That
Smoked,
Cooling.
Like currents recurring,
We plunged down with soft heels.
The clouds drift,
The sun shakes,
Unfolds
The shaft of emptiness
Towards the vacant room;
The cracked torrid floor lies
With circumspection of the heavy air.
And we lie, lying; the sand scrapes
Like a rusted oven plate.

Snippets of a Conversation Throughout the Years

Jacky Yu



*Sing for me, my dear Altair,
With a voice that mixes youth with bitter history.
Serenade me with the tales of mortals
Whose lives fleet like water flowing out of cracked porcelain
My desperate grasps at understanding like the cupping of
palms against the leak
A blissful touch that seeps through my fingers.*

Lady Vega, please don't presume too much of us,
We're foolish, selfish creatures who quicken our lives in
attempts to prevent it
Monkeys who crush themselves under the weight of our own
ego
It's better that we're separated; a millimeter apart and a
galaxy
Desiring the warmth of war, the kingdoms unite and break
apart as if sharing our curse
And it's the weak who must pay for their lust.

*Do you remember, dear Altair,
When you used to talk of human ego while admiring our
own?
Truthfully, mortal politics pale before the celestials' perpetual
schemes
You have seen firsthand my father's immortal spite
Tormenting my love for over a thousand years
All because his daughter dared to reach below the sky.*

Lady Vega, don't tell me you remembered that old
conversation?
When your father blessed me with eternal life
It chained me to the world's eternal hubris.
The battles are changed now; they fire lead instead of
arrows
Mount dragons with a mechanical groan and even deadlier
breath
But they never bother finding a different motive.

*Altair, I have recalled my words many millennia ago
How wrong I was! Nothing ever remains unchanging!
When the new gods from the realms of the cosmos came
All eyes and tentacles and madness
We felt your powerlessness firsthand
My omnipotent father reduced to a lowly local deity, his land
colonized by a foreign force.*

Lady Vega, I suppose no power can remain everlasting,
Even now, I watch the mortals sail into the aether while
tethered to the earth

The void of their eyes displays their wonder while the stars
running down their cheeks their hope.

Even with a desire to expand and conquer using levitating
ships the size of continents,

They still were surprised when it was their turn to be
invaded.

Regardless of how I have changed, we are all made of the
same dust when the time comes.

Altair. Are you there?

Yes, Vega. We are together now. Equal.

What happened?

It seems the universe ended. Now we are intertwined as
energy floating through the cosmos.

No more ambition, conflict, ego, abstract words. Just us.

I am strangely glad. But if we get bored?

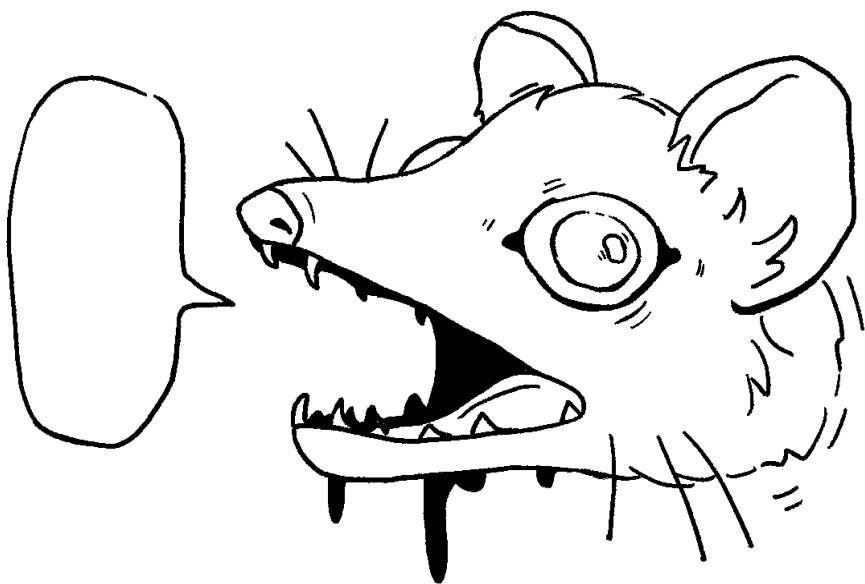
It would be my privilege to be bored alongside you.

Prose



Ode to Roadkill: Reprise

Eugene Kim



Lake [REDACTED] is a large inland lake located deep within the state of [REDACTED]. It boasts an impressive surface area of 173 square miles¹, with an average depth of 498 feet, and a max depth of 966 feet. These conditions render it ideal for an impressive variety of fish to inhabit the lake. Rainbow trout, Chinook salmon, Pumpkinseed, Yellow Perch, Walleye, to name a few. Naturally, this attracts an equally abundant amount of people looking to fish. I, too, am one of those people. At a lake open to fishing year-round, a bright summer day, such as this one, is paradisiac. Fishing rod in one hand, tackle box in the other, I trek towards the lake, the benevolent sun shining its light down on me.

Along the way I spot what appears to be a fur pelt discarded haphazardly in the middle of the road. I wonder what would compel a person to abandon their hard-earned trophy², in such a strange place no less. To sate my curiosity, I head towards the rejected pelt.

It's a disgusting sight--the limp, cold body of an opossum. An unknown force compels me to take a closer look, despite my disgust. I see that it was unfortunate enough to be a victim of some accident. Though its corpse remains intact, the impact must've caused its body to drag across the road. The skin of its face peeled back, exposing muscle and tendon. Beneath its slack jaw, a pool of dried blood has seeped its way into the burning asphalt, staining it a deep red. It's been long dead but it begins to speak to me.

1 It's the 34th largest lake in the United States, smaller than the 33rd largest lake, Sam Rayburn Reservoir (179 square miles), but larger than the 35th largest lake, Eufaula Lake (169 square miles).

2 I'll make it clear here: I don't support the fur trade.

--You should be careful. Beasts wander around this area, even when the sun is high up.

--Beasts? I question. There are no beasts here or anywhere else in this area.

--You, deracinated soul, are ignorant of what goes on here. Gargantuan beasts run by at impossible speeds, leaving behind clouds of smoke.

Suddenly I understand what the thing is going on about.

--We call those *cars*, not beasts. They're not living things like you or I, but exceptionally large tools³ we use to travel long distances in a short amount of time.

--Then do they not pose a threat to those of your kind?

--They do, actually. I'd end up splayed out on the road pitifully just like you are now, were I to be struck by a car, I reply. Generally speaking, though, drivers try to avoid pedestrians as best as they can.

--They avoid you but not I? it questions, and I falter. The answer is glaringly obvious. Uttering it would be obtuse.

--Drivers don't try to hit anything they see. Unless they're a malicious driver. But that's a very small minority, I say. Most of them will do what they can to avoid an accident. But they happen sometimes unfortunately.

³ Is it the correct terminology to describe a car to someone unaware of what a car is a 'tool'? Would 'transportation' be more accurate? Then again, 'transportation' is a human term.

--*So this, too, was an accident.*

--Probably. Something as small as you might not have been visible. Or the driver might not have had the time to swerve out of the way.

--*Would I have been delivered a more merciful fate were I greater in size? Or perhaps a different being altogether?*

--I guess so, I muse. Depending on the kind of person they were, they might've put in more effort to avoid hitting you.

--*And by that you mean?*

--People feel differently depending on what's in front of them, I say, starting to get annoyed. No one wants to be responsible for taking the life of another human regardless of the circumstances. Some likely feel the same about animals they can empathize with, like deer or dogs or cats. For smaller, less sentient animals, they might not even care that much.

--*Why is this value ascribed differently? How can this difference be quantified? Is it not possible for every life—for death is what awaits every creature in this situation—to be weighed the same?*

--Look, I'm not entirely sure either, I say, actually annoyed this time. I'm not the arbiter of judgment, nor am I the one who hit you. I'm sorry it happened but there's nothing I can do for you.

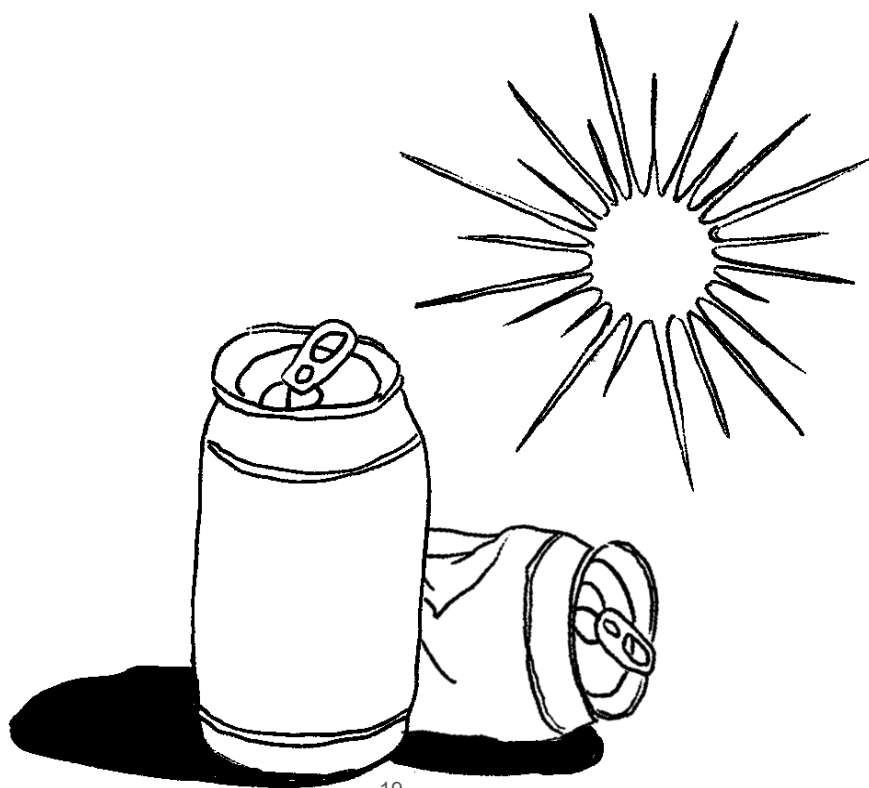
--Sorry? There is no need for pity. I do not abhor death in the same manner you do. My passing changes nothing but my personal consciousness. You are the one who believes everything begins and ends with this existence.

I don't answer. I've wasted enough time here conversing with literal roadkill. As I turn to leave, I glance over my shoulder one last time. The opossum lays on the side of the road, limp and sad as ever. Though, I suppose that is my own conviction. Considering what it was saying, it probably couldn't be more indifferent to its current state. An inexplicable sorrow wells up just under my sternum; I drown it. What is there to be sad about⁴? It lived as it did, and that was enough. I continue my trek towards the lake.

4 A lot maybe it wanted a better life it just wanted to see tomorrow just like many of us i wonder if it ever felt alone I wonder how it felt to so acutely feel every stimuli around you before the last thing was you being crushed under the feet of something unfathomable to you something that shouldn't exist in your world does its dead long dead but where does it go will it end up at the same place we go theres absolutely no way afterlife chooses to discriminate whats the harm in living to live can I assign meaning to its brief existence its not a dignified way to die if youre rotting in the middle of the road

Summer

Nathalia Ortiz Rios



I feel like I'm half a person during the summer. From the moment I'm allowed to walk out of that bunker and have the sun on my skin, I know it's an opportunity to explore the Superior side of me. My mom doesn't like the summer. She insists it gives us false hope. She says the only thing it accomplishes is making the bunker worse once we have to go back. I think she's just very negative. The Superiors give us a chance every year to explore our human side. They allow us to go outside and live amongst the rest of them. At least I'm lucky to be able to focus on being half a person, so that I can forget I'm also half a beast

I wish I could give you more context, but I honestly don't know when or why the mutations started. Some of us are just born like this. My mom and I have these disgusting claws, hair, and fangs. She says they make us special. They make us more capable of building machines and thus they make our work more valuable, so I should not call them disgusting. However, I just don't understand how she can like them when they're the reason we're trapped. If I were fully human, I would get to feel the sun on my skin all year long, I would get to have relationships, I would get to have a personal life that isn't constantly on hold because of work. My mom would stop suffering because of the defects in her machines, which sometimes seem like the only definer of her worth.

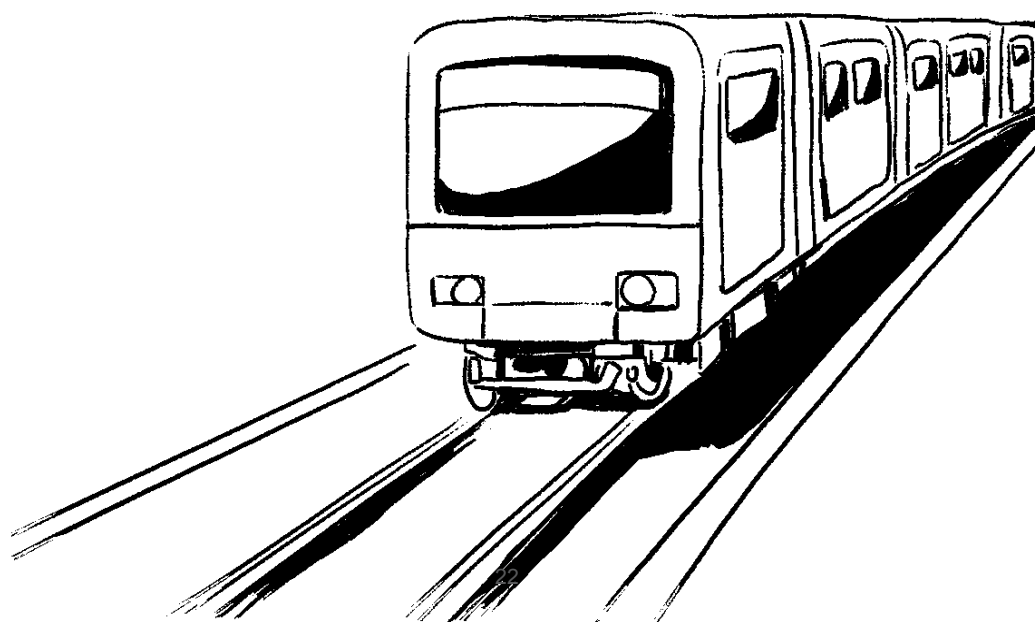
"Give your mother a break. She's right to hate them," says Uncle Elijah as he lays down on the sand. I can't tell if Elijah actually enjoys the summer. He doesn't act like my mom, who refuses to come outside. He just lays on the sand with a book and some beers, and he does what he does until he's too drunk to read and decides to go back home. He doesn't say much, he doesn't seem to have much hope, but he doesn't seem to have lost it either. I like

to sit with him because things are how they should be. We don't talk about have-to-dos, we talk about the heat, and our ideas about life. He tells me old riddles or stories from before the bunker system was created. I like being around Uncle Elijah because he gives me a taste of what it is like to live on the outside of the productivity machine that is the bunker.

Our evening is promptly interrupted by my mom who walks in calling us lazy and drags me away from Uncle Elijah, angry at both of us for the smell of beer coming out of my breath. Deep down I know my mom has a great heart, but she thinks our purpose in life is to produce. After the Superiors caught onto the fact that our mutations made us better workers, they put us in the dark and forced us to start building. They made productivity the goal and stress our pathway to survival. However, they didn't tell us that stress was also the thing that would slowly kill us. They stripped us of calm for the good of the system and they excuse it by giving us the summer to be free, or at least to act like we are.

Line 0

Katarina Kojic



Rumours say that there's a hidden subway route called Line 0.

Nobody knows for sure where it is, or how deep it goes; only that it's 500 metres underground. The distance of the route remains the largest mystery - while it has to be somewhere under Toronto, I can't say for sure where it ends up. It's not as if it acts like a typical subway, stopping every 30 seconds to drop off passengers.

Rumours say that it's a deep blue car, with heaven's stars glued to the metal, lighting the way. Copper torches line the brick walls, the flickering eternal flames acting as signals for the train operator. The train operator remains a conundrum amongst the Line 0 conspiracists. Some people say that they are faceless and thin, their white uniform hanging loosely from their body. A few think that they are simply made of mist and clouds, their unwavering fog hiding their ghastly features. The most popular opinion remains them being a phantom, the "white uniform" simply being their ghostly body.

The car only has space for three passengers. As they wait at Station 0, classical music can be heard all around, the melodies seeping through the cracks in the walls from an unknown source. The eternal flames flicker seven times, repeatedly enveloping the waiting room in both light and darkness to alert the passengers that the car is coming. There is no set time for its arrival. Like a living being, it will commence its voyage once it senses people waiting.

Where does the train go? The conspiracists' ideas are endless.

Some say that Line 0 only has four stops, each relating to a different season. I mean, who wouldn't love to visit the summer station after living in Canada's cold

winters? I find this idea quite boring. Another idea is that the train operator acts as a bridge between life and death. He takes the living on trips to the underworld to see their deceased loved ones. A rather sad and ghastly sight. Perhaps the best theory of all is the *Travel of Two*. The only stations are in space and the deep oceans. If you decide to go under the deep blue, the car will zoom through the deepest trenches of the ocean, allowing you to see all types of fish and plants, and even some mermaids if you're lucky! I believe it's best to visit the former, as the train operator seems to love travelling through the unknown life of the cosmos. Even though you can't see the operator's face, you can see how the stars on the car seem to burn brighter once you enter the heavenly dome.

