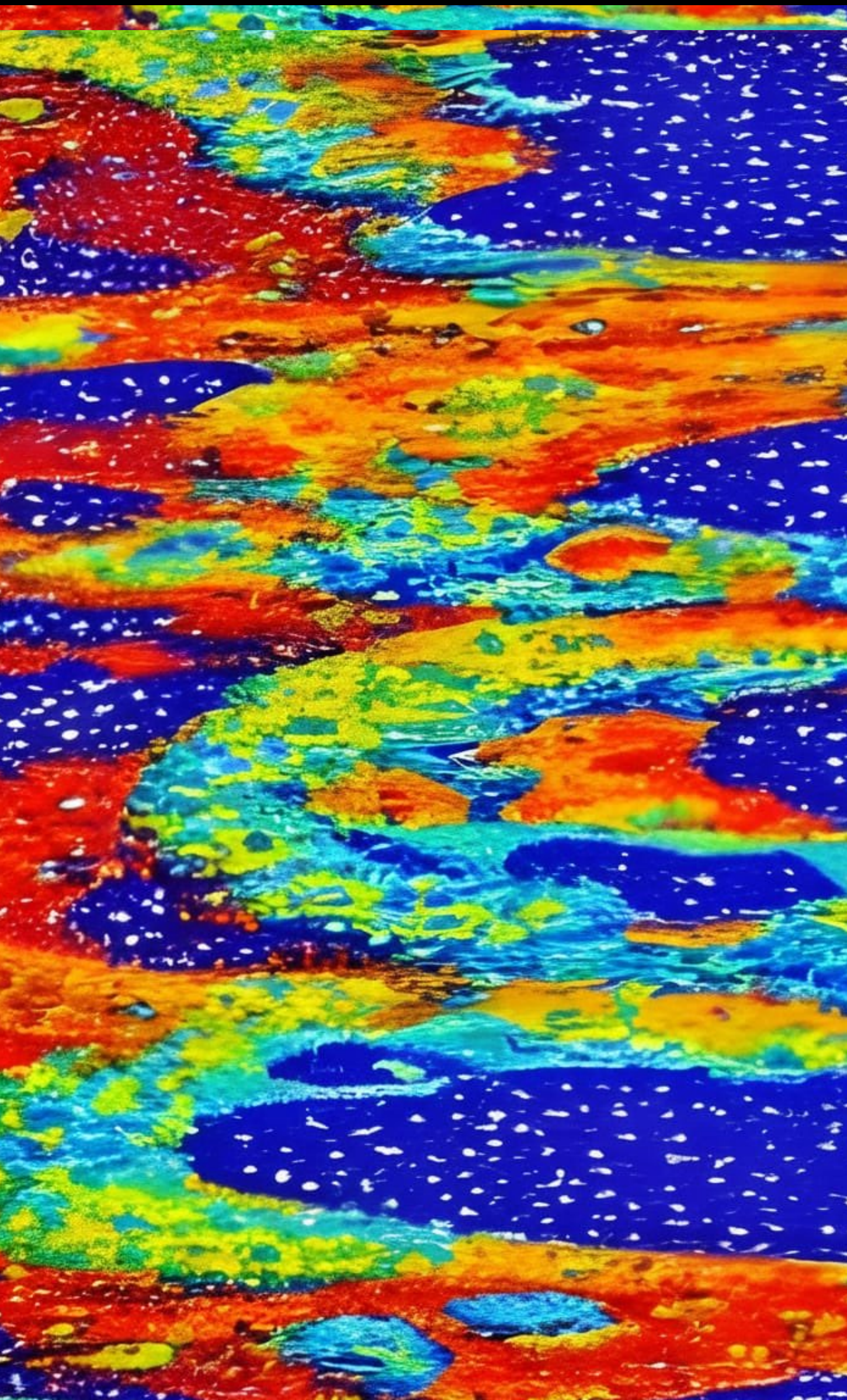
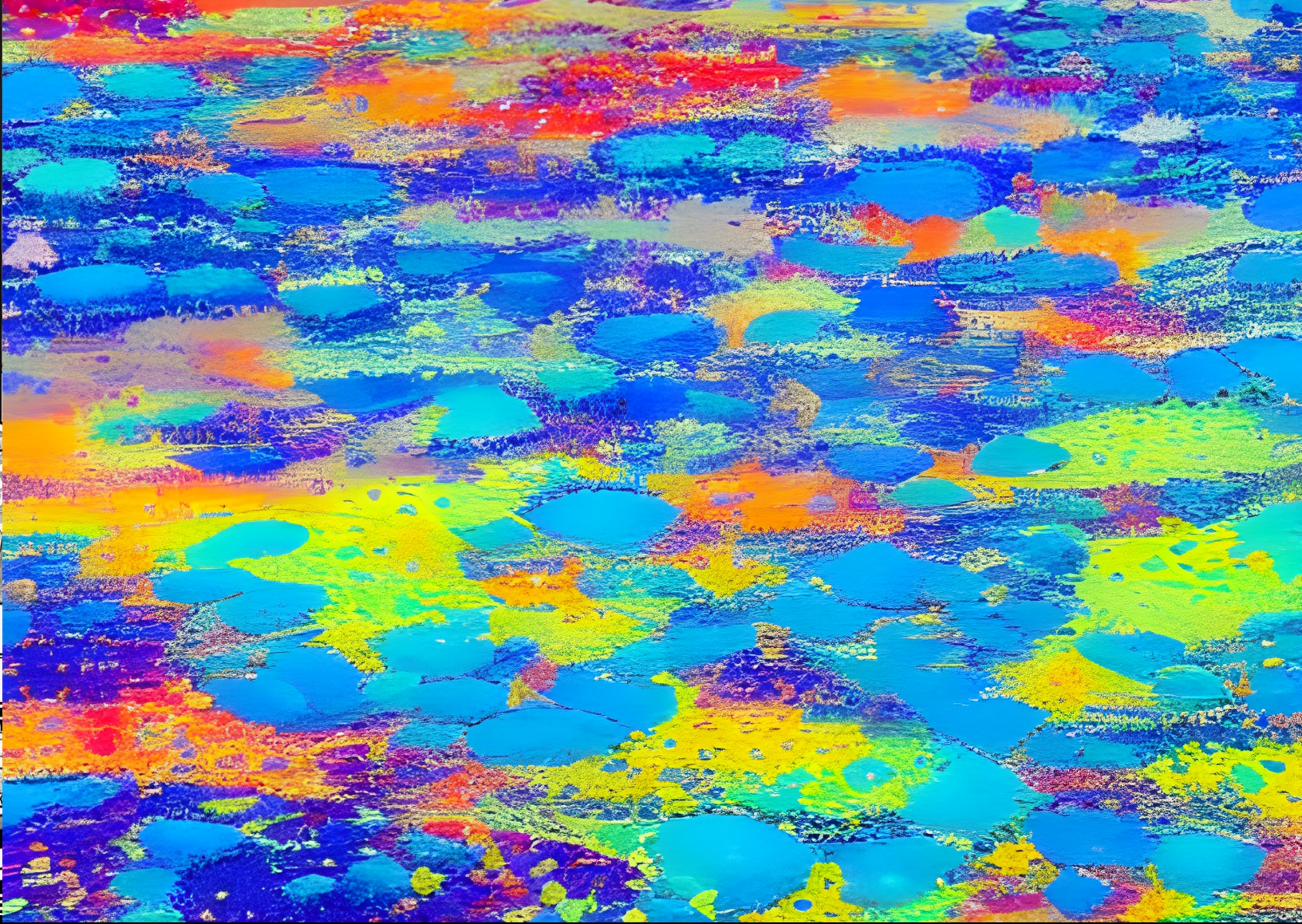


miniMAG

issue178
icy bridges and banks





A FALL ON THE ICE

John Grey

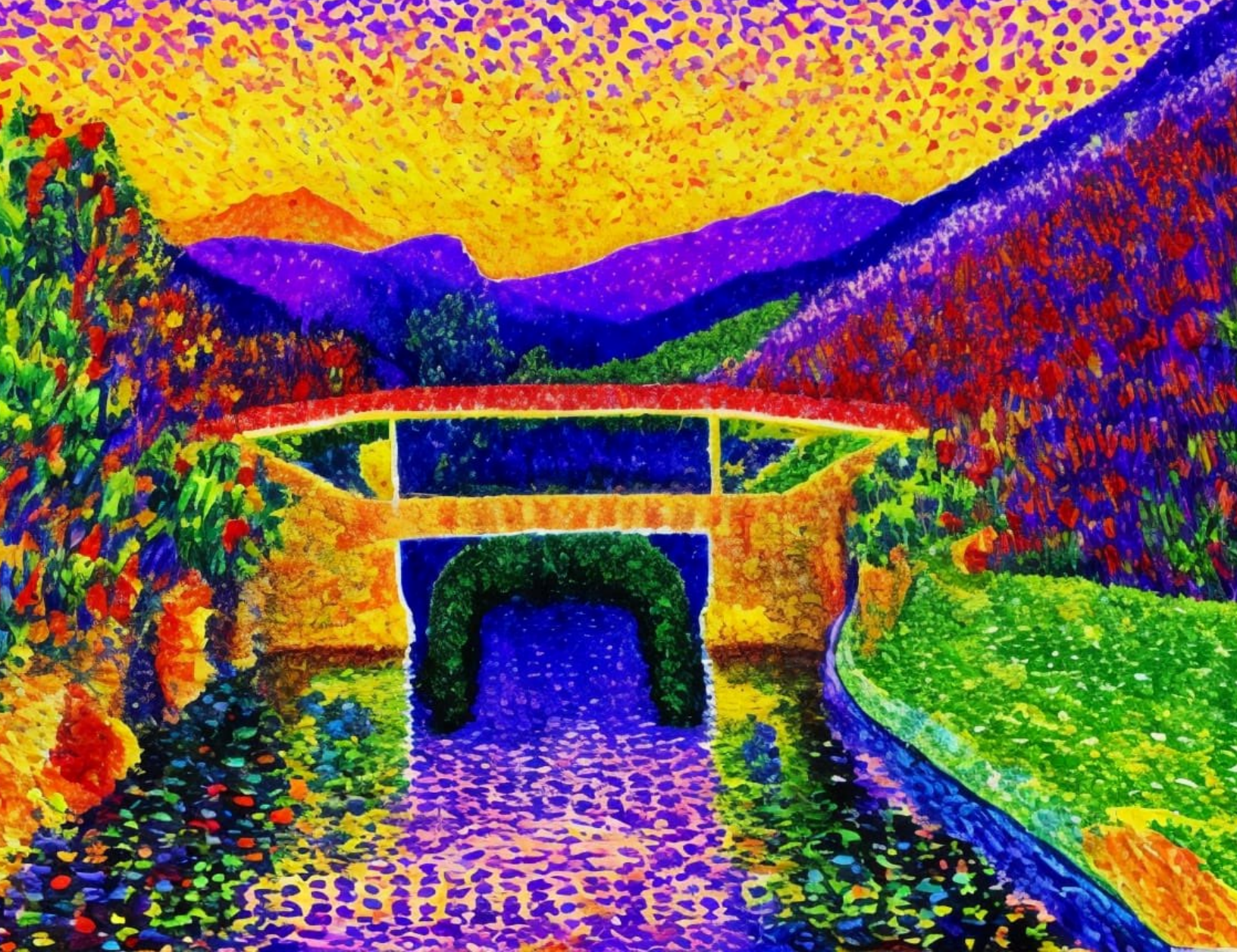
It is an accident and no more
and yet it feels like much more.
It's just a lake but it could be
any place I hang out or inhabit.

It's early evening but time
has a habit of being any time at all.
And I'm alone and yet, even my
solitude is filled with people watching.

Risk has caught up with me,
grabs me by the skate,
pulls me out of spin
onto the hard ice below.

My blades point upward.
My failure spreads the word.
The surface cracks beneath me
like everybody's grin.





Rialto Street

James Croal Jackson

two violins all the mountain holds
(sunshine in suspended string)
 pulley up. pulley up.
given the technical prowess needed—
the bow screech is a murder
of crows!

 to be yet another bird.
black-winged and fragile.

I wish Alex hadn't shared
the photo of the frozen one.

The bridge is too soft
for that.

 Humming the melody
of a hurtling metal. Why,
if I could choose to be young
I'd make a better decision and sit
obediently. What the people want
to know is where did you buy
 your purple sweater
 and why did it come
with wings?



Three Talismans

Marco Etheridge

Bridget Chaucer contemplates the three objects on her desk, then raises her eyes to the silent library beyond the glass walls of her office. A librarian for more than two decades, Ms. Chaucer abhors a locked library, but today the doors are shut tight and will remain so. And before this day is done, Bridget Chaucer may cease to be the chief librarian of Washington County.

She drops her eyes to her desk. Atop a green blotter lie three things: a sword, a potion bottle, and a heavy ring.

Her finger strays to the sword, the favored weapon of any classic hero. This sword is made of popsicle sticks, a gift from one of the children. Gold paint adorns the wooden blade. Black yarn wraps the grip, and the guard is a startling purple. The mighty weapon is only a bit longer than her outstretched hand.

A potion bottle, also a gift, stands beside the miniature sword. Brown glass glimmers with silver and gold stars sprinkled with a heavy cosmos of glitter. Block letters in silver marker spell out MAGIC. A cork stopper, complete with rainbow tassels, holds the magic inside.

And lastly, a heavy steel ring bearing the keys to the library and all its many secrets and treasures. If the keys to a library aren't magic, then there is no magic in the land.

These are her three talismans, gifts from a small girl and a young boy, and the keys to the kingdom. Bridget glances at the clock on the wall. In less than an hour, she will sit before a powerful council. The members of that council will judge her for her crimes and decree her punishment.

Crime. Punishment. Her thoughts leap to a book, as they so often do.

What would Dostoevsky have written about my crimes? Not much, I imagine. Raskolnikov kills an old pawnbroker with an axe, and her half-sister, too. A double axe murder carries some literary weight. Reading a book to children sounds benign by comparison. I wouldn't rate a short story. But that's your crime, Bridge. You read a book to children in a public library. Raskolnikov was sentenced to a penal camp in Siberia. Now, you're facing another Siberia, the very real possibility of being exiled from the library.

The thought of losing the library brings a wave of sadness. She looks down at the talismans on her desk through a scrim of tears. Anger arrives on the heels of sorrow. She wipes away the tears and shakes her head.

If you're going to cry, do it now. You will not shed a tear in front of those bastards.

Bridget raises her eyes to the clock. Ten more precious minutes gone. She forces herself to breathe, brings her emotions under control. Her thoughts turn to the long descent that brought her to this cross-roads.

Two months ago, Bridget Chaucer read a best-selling children's book to a group of children. The crime, if crime it was, took place during story hour in the public library. The book in question was chosen by the children. The story deals with gender issues and being true to oneself.

That she read the book aloud is beyond doubt. As a librarian, Bridget has read countless books to countless children, always with the hope of bringing the joy of books to the next generation of readers.

But times have changed. Across the country, books are under attack. Demagogues denounce anything that does not fit their ideology, and suspect books are at the top of their agenda. Movements to ban books are gaining ground in every state, particularly children's books. Any book dealing with gender or racial issues is a lightning rod for the new wave of censorship.

And so it happened in this harsh new political climate that Bridget Chaucer read a children's book to a group of elementary school kids, a picture book dealing with gender, family, and choices. A week later, someone complained to the council. The council, in turn, claimed that by reading the book, Bridget violated state censorship laws passed in 2022.

It is small comfort to know that she is not the first and will not be the last. Teachers and librarians across the country have been disciplined, terminated, or ostracized from their professions.

The thought sends a chill down her spine.

What am I if not a librarian? Who am I without a library?

She picks up the miniature sword.

What was the boy's name? Tommy, that's it. A sweet child. Reading came hard to him, but he kept trying. He kept trying, Bridge. That's the best anyone can do.

Bridget lays down the sword and picks up the bottle.

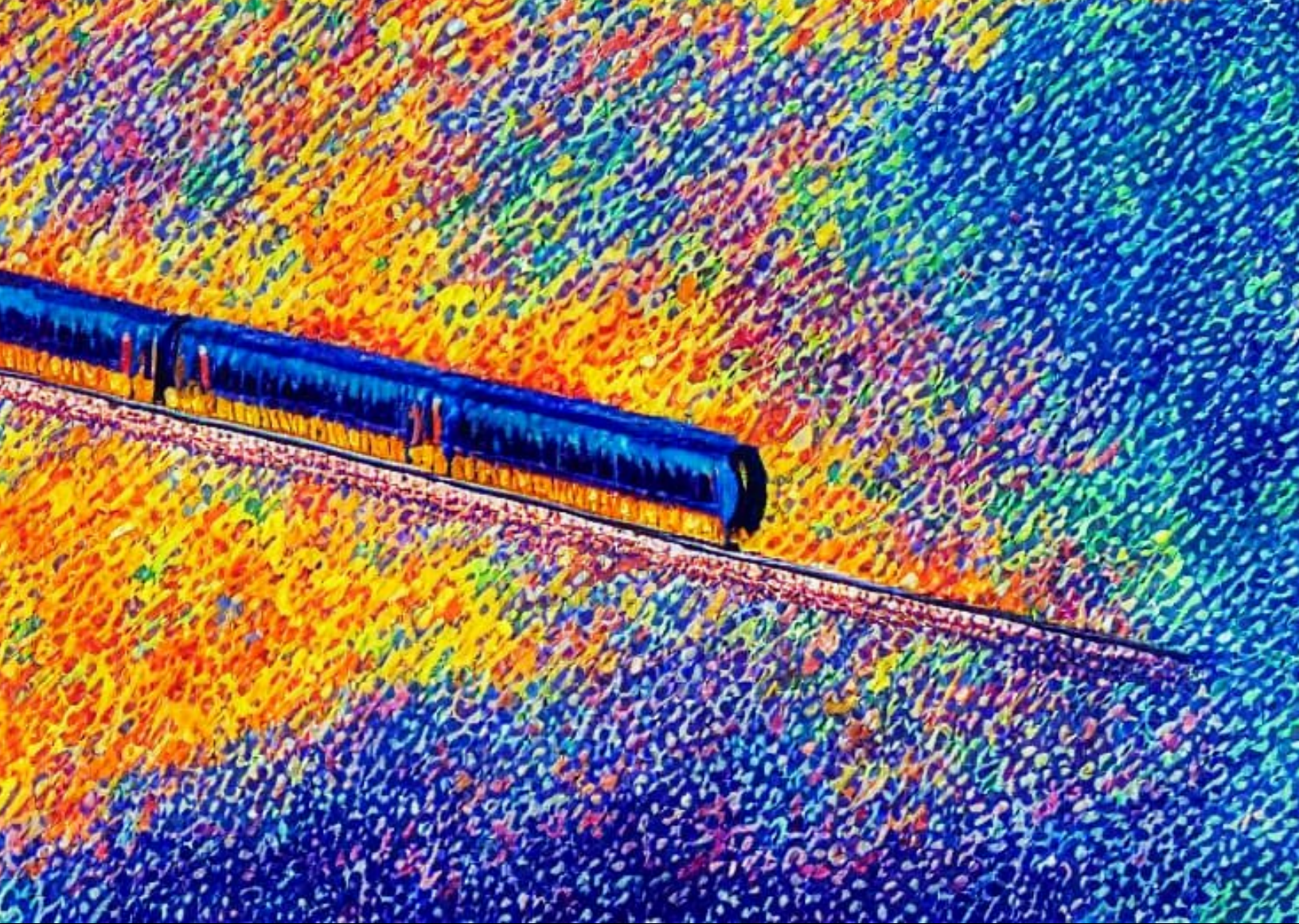
And the potion girl, Briana. So many questions, and the library had answers she needed. But these book haters don't want kids who ask questions. They ride their ideology like an armored vehicle, crushing anything that stands between them and their goals. That's you, just another obstacle in their path. If you're nothing more than a bump in their road, be a big bump.

Face it, this isn't just politics, this is a war. A culture war, an attack on ideas, a battle against books. War claims casualties, and you're about to become one. You can't change what the council does, but you do have choices. You can choose to resist. These fat cats pushing book bans want children to grow up uneducated and servile. You want a world where kids read. Library or not, keep fighting back. Kids are counting on you.

Bridget Chaucer places the potion bottle on the desk. She stands, pulls a messenger bag from the floor. The bag contains her files, two books, and a stack of bookmarks. You never know when a child might need one.

She tucks the sword and potion bottle into her bag, nestling each into its own pocket. Then she picks up the keyring. Armed with three talismans, Bridget Chaucer walks out of her office and into battle.





The New Zealand Railroad

Rachel Turney

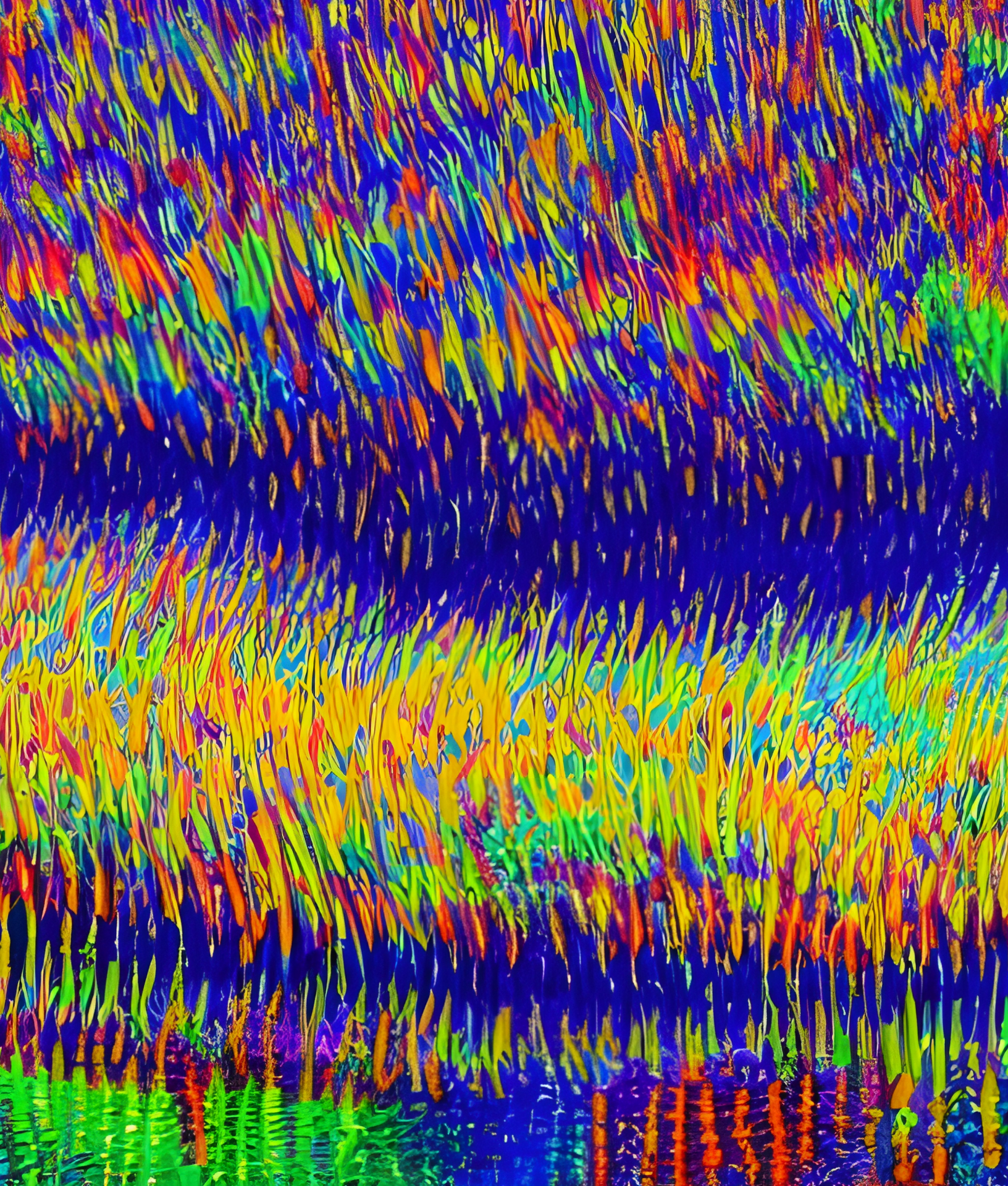
Kia ora - a man says as I board the train. I run my hand over the dark wood and plush velvet. I tap the thick glass and listen to the whistle sounds.

Later, I am standing on the bank of a river with rotting chicken in my hand feeding a wild eel with a woman named Murial.

Even later still, I am clawing through bushes searching for a small flightless bird.

The next week, I learn that many witches live in New Zealand. I meet one at a wine tasting in Nelson. I tell her that I also believe myself to have magical powers. She says that is unlikely because I am an American.

Back on the train, I peer out the window and wonder if I was wrong about my little abilities to see the future and predict what might happen next.



jackdaws

Daria P.

jackdaws live on roadsides,
concrete riverbanks,
shelter on the naked islands
where the memory of water
lives in their pale blue eyes

they have never seen the ocean
but they gossip just like seagulls
and it's easy to imagine
silver waves across the street



hum

airport

the hummingbirds left
it's not my fault;
i know that
they were supposed to go.
they're headed where they need to be
i'm left
i'm
another one abut myself; left alone
because i know they have to leave

they'll hum away and hopefully be great and hopefully all that energy can
travel in some undescribed way back to me vicariously, hopefully let me be,
hopefully catch the wind, hopefully back to me



What is the North Star, to the Wind?

Terry Trowbridge

Nuutuittuq never moves.

Negafook, who are the North Wind,
who love stormy weather,
love to move, love movement for movement's sake.

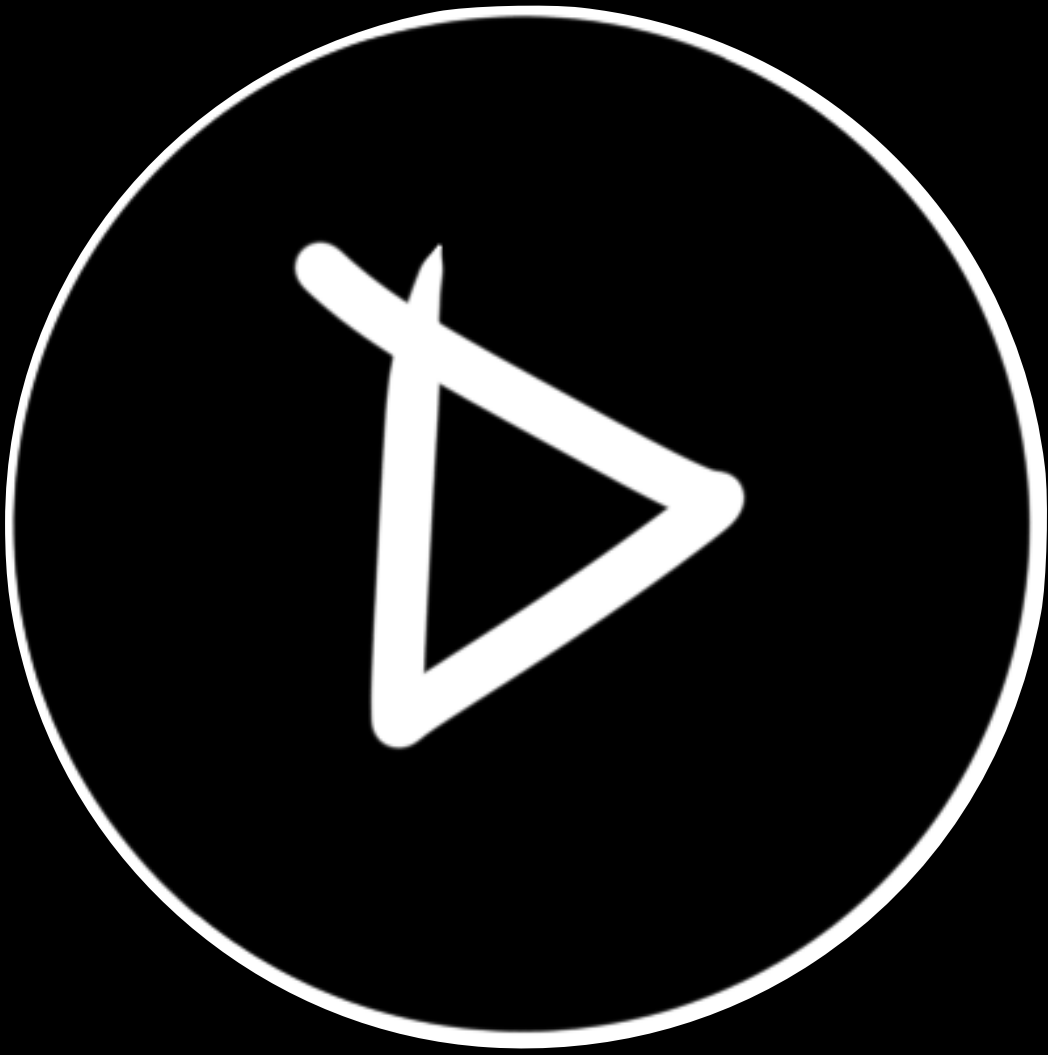
There is only one place the Negafook cannot go:

Nuutuittuq

If we were to sit in that place,
upside down and dangling our hair,
we would see Negafook everywhere
– all things moving except for ourselves –
and all things moved by the North Wind
rushing away and bringing the South Wind back.

We do not know, but we can speculate,
Negafook might fear Nuutuittuq
Nuutuittuq might be too far for Negafook to reach
Perhaps Nuutuittuq is invisible to Negafook
Who maybe can only see movement, only see himself

in motion until becoming motion until formless
like rain in the ocean current



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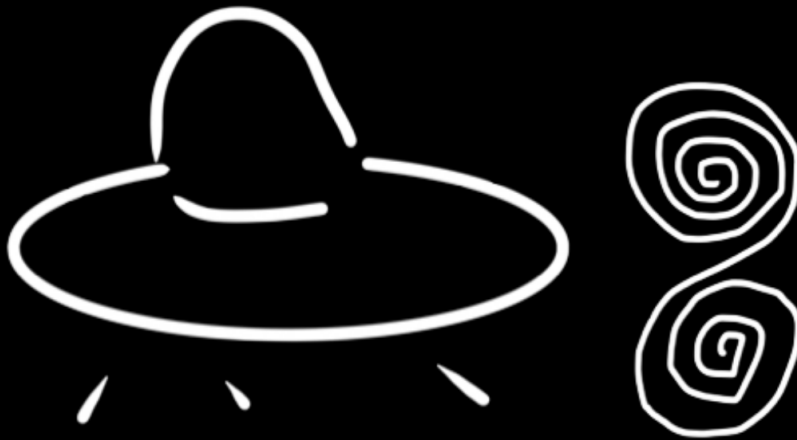
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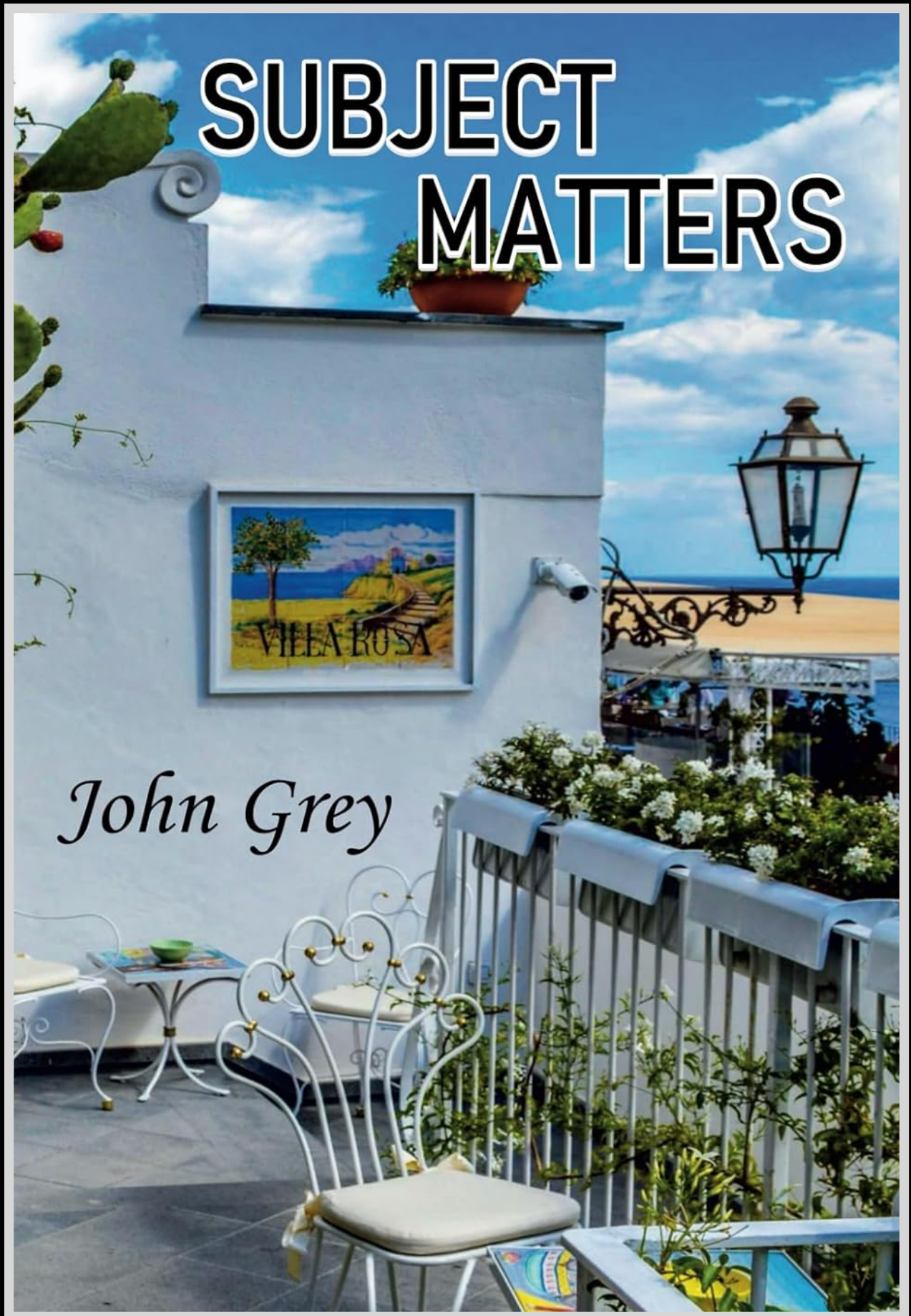


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