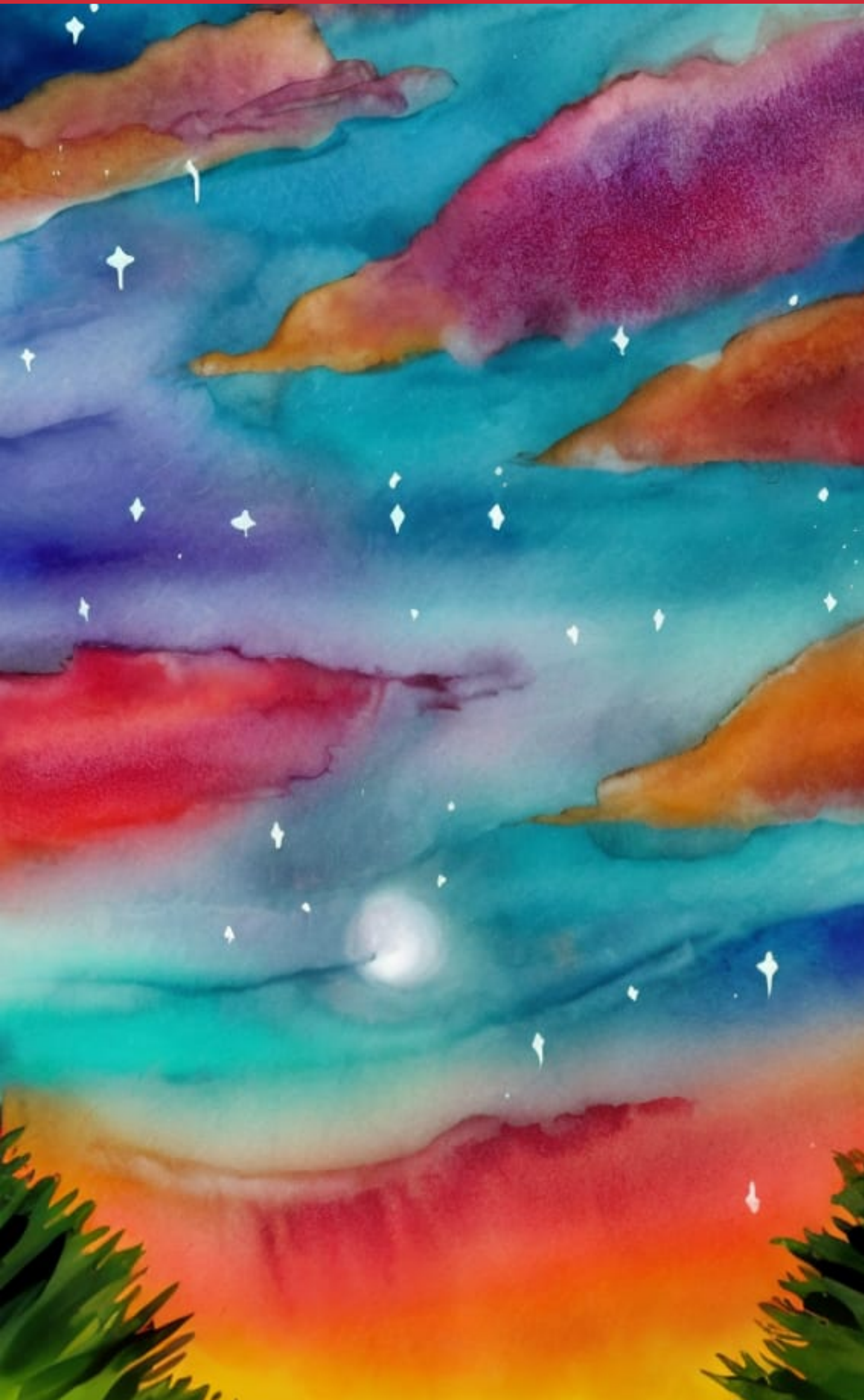


**miniMAG**

*issue208*  
*night*





## “Threshold Creep”

Melissa Jayne Bailey

Although I am up late, underneath  
the correct man,  
I still hope  
you'll text tonight,  
drunk,  
at some irrevocable hour.



## the Scream

Neil Henderson

It isn't long before my old iPhone14 starts ringing and repeatedly ringing like a severe case of the screaming habdabs. I am not impressed but my younger self he cowers in the corner his hands covering his ears, his face like the agonised face of that Edvard Munch painting is a picture of dread. He trembles, 'I don't think I can go through it all again.'

My younger self doesn't notice my expression change. I'm through with this fear I thundered. Fed up with that queasy 'tilt' ringtone shredding my nerves. I frown at my younger self and sigh - it's hardly the death knell, is it? It's bullshit.

Here is a beautiful twilight instead.

I like the dark. I am in the garden digging among the aeoniums digging up my old iPhone14. Here it is still in its box. The product I buried to forget. My hands muddy prising off the lid. This is not a time capsule. The outdated device depresses me. I deliberately didn't transfer data when upgrading to its successor. This iPhone is dead. No caller notifications. No ringtone. It's just a slither of lithium and silver encased in black glass. Rigid as a corpse. Useless.

My younger self taps on the window from indoors. I look over my shoulder. He's frowning, holding at arm's length my current mobile phone - screen all lit up. My younger self mouths the words—its ringing. My younger self is shaking. That distinctive ringtone—tilt, ringing in our ears. That face again. My younger self screaming.



## “the cackle”

Bob Carlton

the cackle  
of mockery  
a risible  
derision

stains the night  
with a smear  
of cheap lipstick  
cheaper  
held selves



## Clockwise Dreams

Holly Day

Robots don't believe in ghosts, they attribute  
the wheezing and clicking of late-night phantoms  
to faulty streetlights and glitches on the power grid.  
If a ghost were to present itself to a robot, the robot  
would be able to dissect the apparition  
as some clichéd space-time anomaly,  
something broken in the universe  
quickly mended by the natural order of the fabric of space  
mending itself.

There would be no need to haunt a world peopled by robots.

In a world run by machines,  
ghosts would find themselves  
completely explained or dismissed.

The shadows of what we were  
would phantom hang or drown or stab ourselves  
night after night, scream for an audience  
that never feared or learned fear  
but only calculates and classifies who an apparition belonged to  
and why the ghost is a reappearing specter.

The grave sites will be kept up with meticulous detail,  
flowers will be replaced, any new revelations  
will be catalogued and stored and examined  
in cold but sufficient detail.



## Picture in My Wallet

Peter Mladinic

Pat's in the foreground, off-white angora sweater, brown hair a teased bouffant, broad face in profile looking at something. Beside yet slightly behind her, I sit looking down at my desk. A black pompadour, a blue pullover, I look like I'm daydreaming in our homeroom, photographed in 1965, for our yearbook. Today it's in the wallet of my daydream. I take it wherever I go.

Pat is dead. A victim of domestic violence she died in '73, leaving a small daughter who, when old enough to drink, I met one night in a bar, and whose name I knew but have forgotten. At the bar, she asked, "What was my mother like?" I thought: if it were up to me, your father would be rotting in jail for killing her, though I knew little of the circumstances of that night.

Now she lives in me, which, for Pat must be like living with no one. Under one roof, I'm there but not there, aloof. Most days I don't even think of her, though I know she loves me. I know it sure as I know my name and the contents in my wallet: driver's license, Medicare card, Pat's picture. Now she's a picture that evokes a memory, a name on a headstone, a ghost who loves

me and who I don't love back, though she's always here for me, with me; there's little she wouldn't do for me, under our roof and outside our home. She has me thinking this is how it is: the lover and the beloved. One always loves more than the other; sometimes, the other doesn't love, yet they are together. What was my mother like? We were drinking heavily. The bar was crowded.





## The Books That Stop The Bullets

Kushal Poddar

A book kept in the inner breastpocket  
once stopped a bullet.  
Since then the battalion uses the pockets  
near their tired hearts  
for the safekeeping of the thickness  
of their religions. Otherwise  
they have earth, moon, water,  
conversations, silence, wristwatches.  
Tonight, shadowy light floods the trench.  
At the far end of the darkness  
in a mirror trench someone opens his book,  
not to read a verse, but for the photo  
that marks the space between  
two random pages.



## A Murmuration of Dreams

Saba Zahoor

Last night I dreamt  
I slept beneath a moon-washed sky,  
opening to a murder of crows,  
a whisper of moths  
dropping, pittering  
into my mouth, freshly peeled  
like pomegranate.

A skein of dreams overlapped—  
a palimpsest of memories,  
albeit with my usual crown shyness.

I dreamt I woke,  
thawed by sun pillars,  
a vincent of sunflowers  
arching, bowing over me,  
a flux of starlings  
murmuring a return.

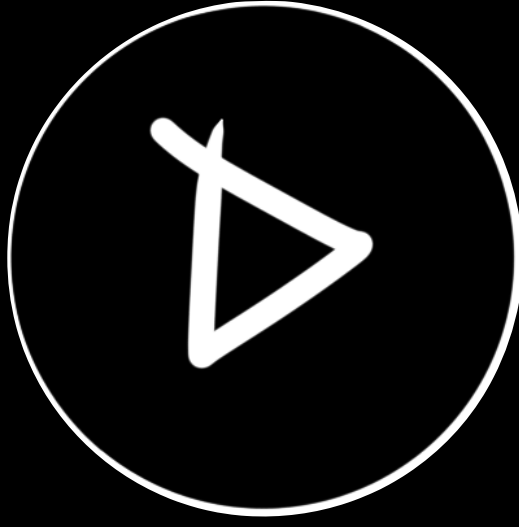
I rose,  
billowing the spore rain  
from my clothes—  
leaving behind  
a massacre of poppies,  
a susurrations of grasses,  
a natter of critters,  
where I had lain.



## A SHORT DISCOURSE ON NIGHTFALL

John Grey

The evening is fine  
with the sun going down.  
The western sky blinks orange  
and the shadows whisper,  
“We’ll take it from here.”  
Brightness  
is taken up  
by streetlights  
and car headlamps.  
Color resorts  
to the gaseous tubes of neon.  
In every window,  
shine reverses direction.  
A bulb must now do the work of the sky.



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“Threshold Creep” by Melissa Jayne Bailey

Melissa Jayne Bailey is a high school English teacher and poet from Michigan.

“the Scream” by Neil Henderson

Insta: @\_\_neillien

“A SHORT DISCOURSE ON NIGHTFALL” by John Grey

Book: Subject Matters

“the cackle” by Bob Carlton

“Clockwise Dreams” by Holly Day

Holly Day’s writing has recently appeared in Analog SF, Talking River, and New Plains Review, and her published books include Music Theory for Dummies and Music Composition for Dummies. She currently teaches classes at The Loft Literary Center in Minnesota, Hugo House in Washington, and the Indiana Writers Center.

“Picture in My Wallet” by Peter Mladnic

“The Books That Stop The Bullets” by Kushal Poddar

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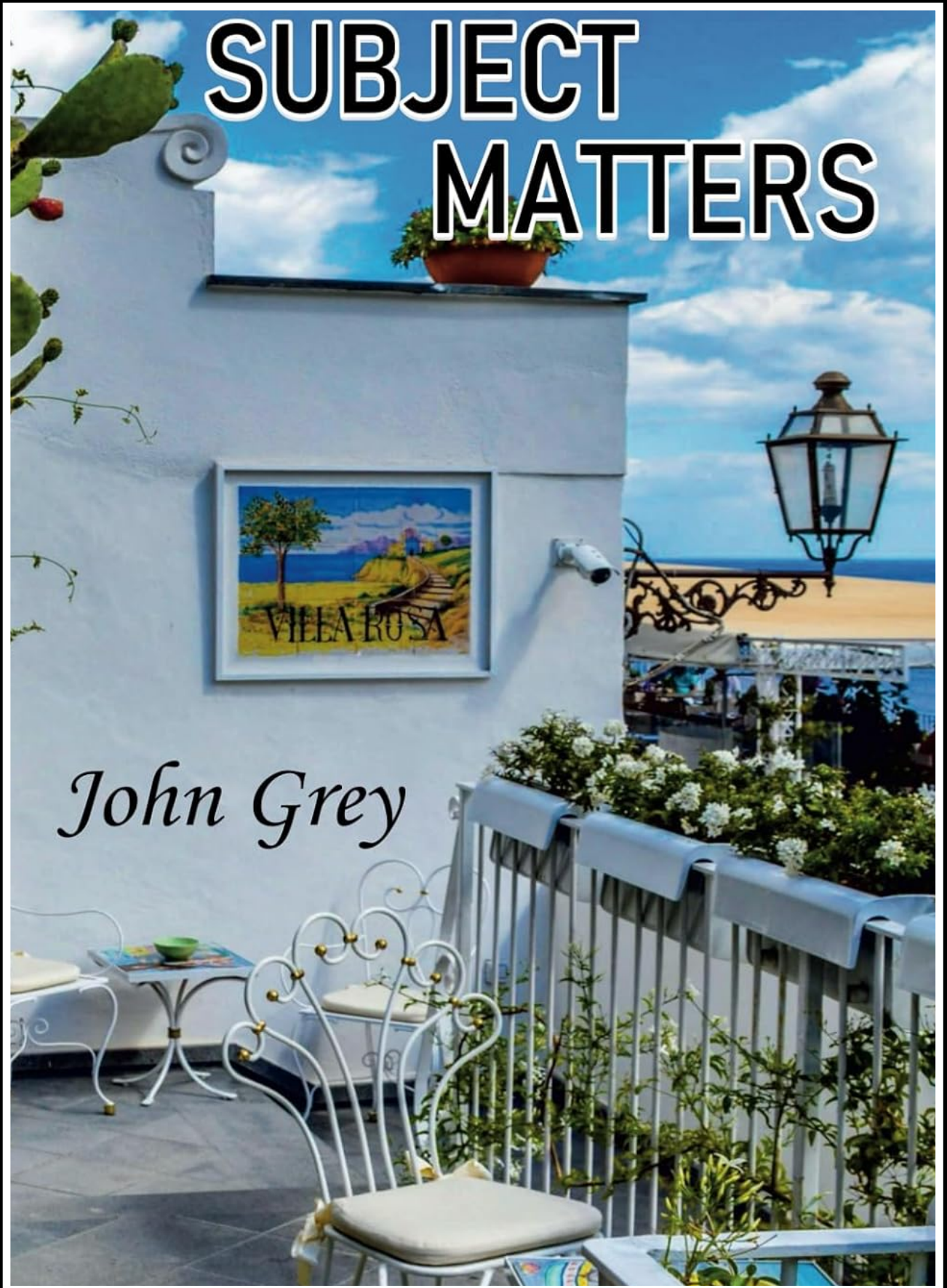
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