

miniMAG

issue225

eggs benedict





The Problem with Zippers

Robert Witmer

She wants a Scotch Terrier, to lead along the esplanade. I want another shot of Glenlivet, no ice. We can't see eye to eye. She in her designer shades, and mine blurry. Words between us like flurries of snow, in the headlights, of an oncoming truck, in the middle of the road, in the middle of our lives, going on, regardless.



Once a Day

Bob McAfee

Once a day
I have my say
I think nobody listens

Once a week
I rise to speak
And don't care who is missing

Once a month
I speak in tongues
No one solves my riddle

Once a year
I persevere
Until one man is able

Then I arise to theorize
Try to solve my quandary

Sit down to win the booby prize
And sort my dirty laundry



Two for Twenty Dollars

T.S. Carney

The retail store opened early. There was a side door only workers or confused deli customers knew about. The corridors past it were long and windowless and smelled like industrial floor wax. Employees had a map. It did not show exits.

Acnalb Teufel worked Returns and Exchanges.

He was new, barely a month in. Too early to make friends, fast enough to make enemies. Management treated him like a seasonal hire who would eventually disappear, except they could not move him, discipline him, or fire him.

They had tried.

One morning, before Acnalb started, three men in black suits and sunglasses placed him at the counter and told management he was staying. There was no explanation and no paperwork, only a reminder that compliance was mandatory and questions were discouraged.

Acnalb did not remember this. He just showed up when scheduled and did his job.

When the doors opened, a man stepped forward with two children.

“Hey,” the man said.

“Arnold? Dude?” Acnalb replied.

“I have a problem.”

“Ho!”

“Hoe? What the hell?”

“You said ‘Hey.’ I responded. Call and response.”

The man stared at him. “It’s early. My wife wants me to return these.”

Acnalb examined the items carefully. “Why didn’t she like them?”

“She said I didn’t look good in it.”

“I see.” Acnalb lifted the underwear slightly. “You don’t fill it the way the previous owner did. These have to be destroyed.”

“Yes,” the man said. “And I want my money back.”

Acnalb held the underwear up under the fluorescent lights. The stains were visible. The children leaned in.

“You need more fiber,” Acnalb said. “And better habits.”

“I want a manager.”

Acnalb picked up the phone. “Tango. Foxtrot. Tango.”

The manager arrived immediately.

“Your employee embarrassed me in front of my children,” the man yelled.

“Daddy, what’s a skid mark?” the girl asked.

“When cars stop too fast,” the man said.

“Or when people don’t clean themselves,” Acnalb said.

“Acnalb,” the manager said, already escorting the man away.

The next customer stepped forward and threw two pairs of pants onto the counter.

“I have a problem too,” she said. “The sign says two for twenty, but they told me it was eighty.”

“I’m confused,” Acnalb said.

“The sign says twenty dollars, but they told me eighty.”

“And you said no?” Acnalb asked. “What’s the problem with eighty dollars?”

“Because the sign says twenty. If something is twenty, is it eighty now?”

“No,” Acnalb said. “It’s twenty.”

“Finally. Someone with reason.”

“But if I was told it was eighty,” Acnalb continued, “I would take eighty. The computer decides these things.”

“I’m not leaving unless the twenty dollars is honored.”

Acnalb nodded. “The customer is always right.”

He took the pants, folded them poorly, opened the register, and removed a twenty dollar bill. He placed it on the counter.

“What are you doing?” the woman screamed. “Fix the price.”

“You said two for twenty,” Acnalb said. “I bought them. Here is your money.”

Security arrived.

“He stole my pants,” the woman yelled.

“The customer offered twenty,” Acnalb said calmly. “I accepted. She is now refusing to leave the transaction area.”

Security checked the camera.

“Ma’am,” one of them said, “you need to come with us.”

“No.”

They escorted her away.

“Good work,” security said to Acnalb. “Most people would have caved.”

“I would never cave. Bears live in caves, and I’m not a bear,” Acnalb said.

Security paused, then walked off.

Acnalb returned to his counter. Customers came and went. Later, the man with the children returned and completed his return without incident, avoiding eye contact.

Acnalb processed it efficiently.





Fried Eggs for Breakfast

Albert Hwang

My dad in a white tee
shirt. Collar stretched,
starched in old sweat, reading
yesterday's paper slowly, tilling it with
a dictionary.

His chopsticks scratch a Kmart
plate, next to him plastic-wrapped Kmart
cake. His paper sighs as he folds it back
again, for tomorrow.

We don't eat in the dining room, it's been
cellophaned for fine furniture.

We eat in the kitchen,
on sticky mats that say
it'd be Prudential to buy insurance.

A fried egg leaves its first home
“But you try to keep the center,”
my mom says. “And we don't call it fried
we call it *held*, 荷包. Like a pocket,
like a purse.” A small sun housed
in a purse of exploding clouds,
“And you have to flip it,” she says,
“To hold the center.”



TBR

Stephen Ground

your *just so* home is speckled with stacks of unbroken spines, flawless ink untouched by warm rays of sun or gentle strokes of misty irises—scattered pseudo-haphazardly ‘round cramped, eggshell quarters in perfectly piled memorial towers to unstudied thoughts & fully realized arcs, while I’m left without safeguards from half-truths & deflections you shoot like a marksman with gold medal aim. yet existentially breathless, you choose dishonest gambits over wisdom of sages gathered up for superficial colours & visual wonders then positioned *just so* on coffee tables & ledges to project your big brain, your insights, how you’re deeply empathic. but in truth you’re just begging—for what? I don’t know if I know, but I know it’s unearned.



I AM WEARING PINK TOMORROW

Ruqiya Juraeva

Poetry is a collage
of alibi
for a monster.

My poetry is
like a delusional
fresh air
that makes you think
your sick lungs
are prone to survive.
And speaking
of delusion,
I wear poetry
as my mask that helps
act my role properly
in my made up life.

I am just one monster
Wearing pink tomorrow
Convincing myself
to be normal
and to belong
I tend to forget
to question myself
as often as I should,
I tend to forget
my delusion,
Self absorbing
with my new self.
I am just one monster
Wearing pink tomorrow
Pretending to be normal



Farewell Message

Martina Matijević

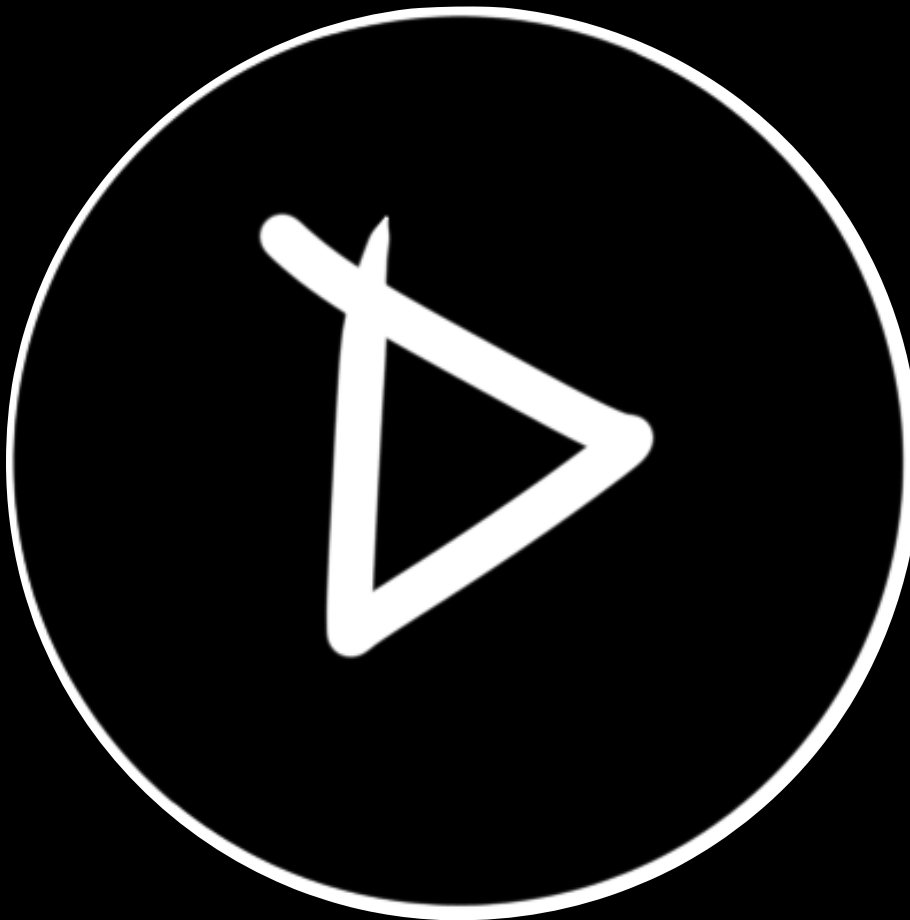
Your voice,
a fresh strawberry
eclipsed by
the green sunset.

Its juice
glides across my lips,
veiling the fact
I picked it from
a forbidden patch.

blue moon —
a sudden beep from
his message

shooting star —
a song link
in the P.S.

constellation —
reading
between the lines



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Book: Sunrise, in a Rabbit Hole

“TBR” by Stephen Ground
Insta: @oddityfarm

“Fried Eggs for Breakfast” by Albert Hwang
Insta: @move.albie.move

“Two for Twenty Dollars” by T.S. Carney

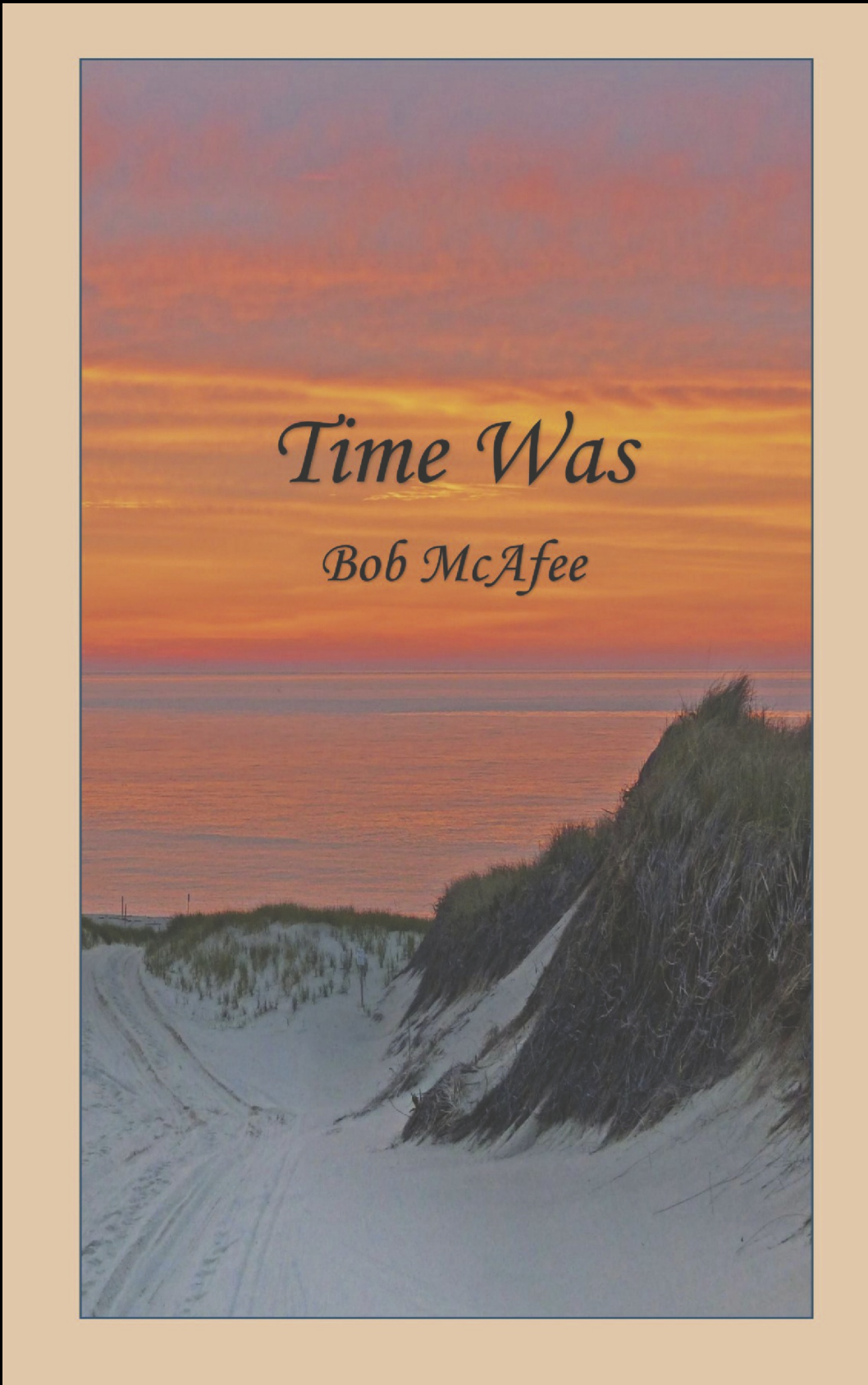
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Book: Time Was
Website: <https://www.bobmcafee.com/>

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SUNRISE, IN A RABBIT HOLE

Robert Witmer

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