

Last Issue: Submissions for issue 10, before May 16th midnight
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Hanging on or Clearing Off?

Faith Walker

I am not someone who typically uses art to express myself but last Sunday after our AGM I felt compelled to make this drawing.

The left hand is known as the heart hand. My heart hand with a marriage band represents my love and commitment to this community. The right hand is trying to also hang on but in an attempt to secure my place, I grab and miss, pulling off the chalice and runner from the altar. The rainbow represents our community, it's inclusiveness and 6 of our 7 principles. The 7th being reflected in the purple chalice. "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part".

The candle has been extinguished, my spirit is in turmoil.

The art also a more literal representation of own my struggle - am I leaving or staying?

Other questions I ask.

What am I hanging onto and why? What is clearing as we sweep aside our symbols? What kind of community is being remade in this time of conflict and difficulty?

I don't have the answers they are for us all to consider.

This one thing I do know. The chalice can be righted and the candle (spirit) can be lit again. I know this is the place is where my heart wants to reside. It is where grace and healing live.

Let's all take the time to reflect, to heal and wonder.

Peace beloved NUUC.



Images of Veils

Lauren Renzetti

(From top left clockwise: Air, Algae, Water, Watermelon)



The Puzzle of Life

Peter Marmorek

Games and puzzles have always attracted me. Was I attracted because I was good at them, or was I good at them because I spent so much time playing them? I had books of puzzles when I was just old enough to read, and I accumulated stacks of "two minute puzzles" for years, sharing the best of them with my classes when there was only two minutes left in the class. I taught math, I hoarded clever puzzles to share at those moments when half the class had finished and the other half were still working. My proudest moment at MIT was when I won the Eastern Campus pinball championship.

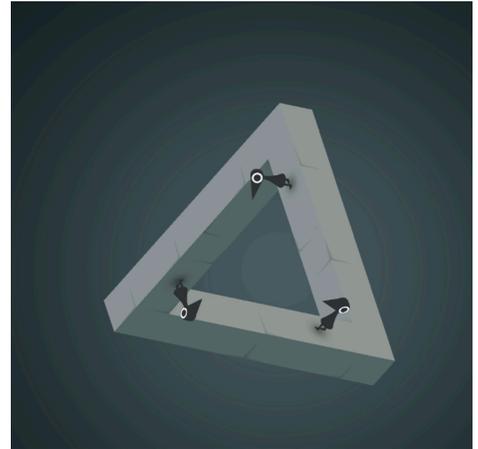
I've always loved that moment of pure thrill when a puzzle gets solved. An example? At university we tried to figure out how to stuff computer chads into a water balloon. Chads were the tiny rectangles that got punched out of computer cards when we wrote programs. If you need to know what computer cards were, just pretend I said confetti instead. The problem is the same: if you could get a water balloon filled with both water and small pieces of cardboard, when it exploded the wet chads (confetti) would stick to everything and be incredibly hard to clean up. But how to fill a balloon with them?

The answer was to fill an empty coke bottle with them, blow up the balloon, put the balloon neck over the neck of the bottle, and invert. The chads would fall into the expanded balloon, which could then be filled with water, tied off, and hurled. Most satisfying.

Games were fun when other people were around. My favourite was Speed Scrabble: it's played like regular scrabble, but without turns. You make a word, write down your score, draw new letters and start looking for the next word. Continual action, as opposed to the traditional version which involves sitting around being bored until it's your turn. Try it once and you'll never go back.

Living alone in the time of pandemic, I've been drawn more to puzzles. Speed games are problematic... my reflexes are slower than they once were. I do play games (bridge, cribbage) against the computer, but it's not as good as having human opponents. But puzzles are interesting... My iPhone lets me play for a few minutes while waiting in a supermarket line, and then continue a day later. Puzzles can be meditative: Monument Valley is a current favourite. I have to guide the only character though an Escher like

landscape, leading her to doors that take her to the next landscape. The beams she walks along can be manipulated by touch, they'll rotate to realign in ways that our geography doesn't. There is an old woman she meets who says cryptic things ("We have lost our ancestor's sacred geometry") and crows who caw at her, but there's no time pressure, just strange rotations until you get her to the next door.



I've come through four years in which my life twisted and stretched my heart, so walking into transformed landscapes where the ground I stand on changes in unpredictable ways seems pretty natural. What does this game mean? Truly, I have no idea. But I have learned a few things: ignoring those who caw at you is wise, accepting the unpredictable changes that happen is all you can do, and there is no way to know what will happen when you go through the next door.

It seems there are people who like puzzles, and those who consider them pointless. And yes, from time to time I feel guilty that I'm wasting time playing games when I could be doing something productive, like discovering a cure for bunions or running a marathon. But not only has age made me face up to the fact I'm not going to find the bunion-beating cure, or run pretty much anywhere until someone else solves bunions, it's also made me realize that guilt is a useless emotion. Play games? Sure. Don't play games? Fine. But don't waste emotional energy feeling badly about playing games.

I've been told that it's very good for ageing brains to play games. But puzzles become monotonous: Sudoku, crosswords, all follow the same pattern. So I've set myself a target of playing one new puzzle every week so that my brain remains young and supple. Apple Arcade gives me access to 180 games (\$5/ month), which will keep my neutrons firing for three years, probably much longer as they add new ones every week. So far it seems to be working.

In Tint, a new game I started yesterday, I have to draw lines connecting yellow, blue, or red dots to orange, purple, or green butterflies. If I connect a blue line and a yellow line, I get a green line which will free the green butterfly to fly off the page. But lines can't cross, and you can't blend secondary colours with primary ones. But you can always start over, and there's no score, no time limit, just the satisfying sound of a completed page turning to the next page. And then to the one after that.

And how well is this brain training working out? Well, a few weeks ago I was trying to reestablish communication with Revenue Canada who had somehow fatally compromised my financial records. But on their website, an abject message apologized for their incompetence and told me to reregister myself. Everything seemed to work until we got to the point at which they wanted my phone number, entered twice. I entered it, twice, and was told it wasn't acceptable. I reentered it twice, but the Revenue Canada program didn't like it any better. So I gave up and left.

But with income tax approaching, I realized I had to solve this puzzle. So I went back and everything happened the same way, a couple more times. Then I decided to try a different browser. The other browser works perfectly, and Revenue Canada and I am once again on speaking terms, electronically at least. (I note—parenthetically—that every other website out to at least the orbit of Saturn has the courtesy to tell you when it's your browser that is the problem, but if you wanted people to like you, you probably wouldn't choose to work for Revenue Canada, would you?)

Trying futile doors which don't open until you find an alternative pathway is a pretty standard trope in puzzle games. And solutions which are deliberately difficult and hard to find are what make a regular situation into a puzzle. So playing endless arbitrary puzzles is probably the best possible preparation for going through Revenue Canada's website.

And small puzzles prepare us for the bigger puzzles. You probably remember Tetris, in which falling objects in a variety of shapes had to be rotated and aligned as they fell, so they could be neatly stacked at the bottom of the screen. That's like life, as different challenges come at us and we need to figure out how to fit them into our days. But in Tetris, the challenges come faster and faster until, inevitably, the line of unaligned objects rises to the top of the screen and the game is over. In life, we get less able to deal with challenges, as our bodies and minds age, and eventually our game is over. But losing at Tetris, losing at all games is good preparation for losing at that last big game. And then you go to the bardo, (the limbo between lives) a giant finger pushes the sacred restart button, and the game starts over. See, death's not really so bad, is it? Just a quick break between the end of one game and the start of the next.

Podophyllum peltatum (Mayapple)

Nancy Vander Plaats

Thrusting through soil, and last seasons relatives,
Slowly unfurling, lifting, opening,
Spreading twin parasols
To shelter a single flower.
To grow a single fruit--deadly, delicious.

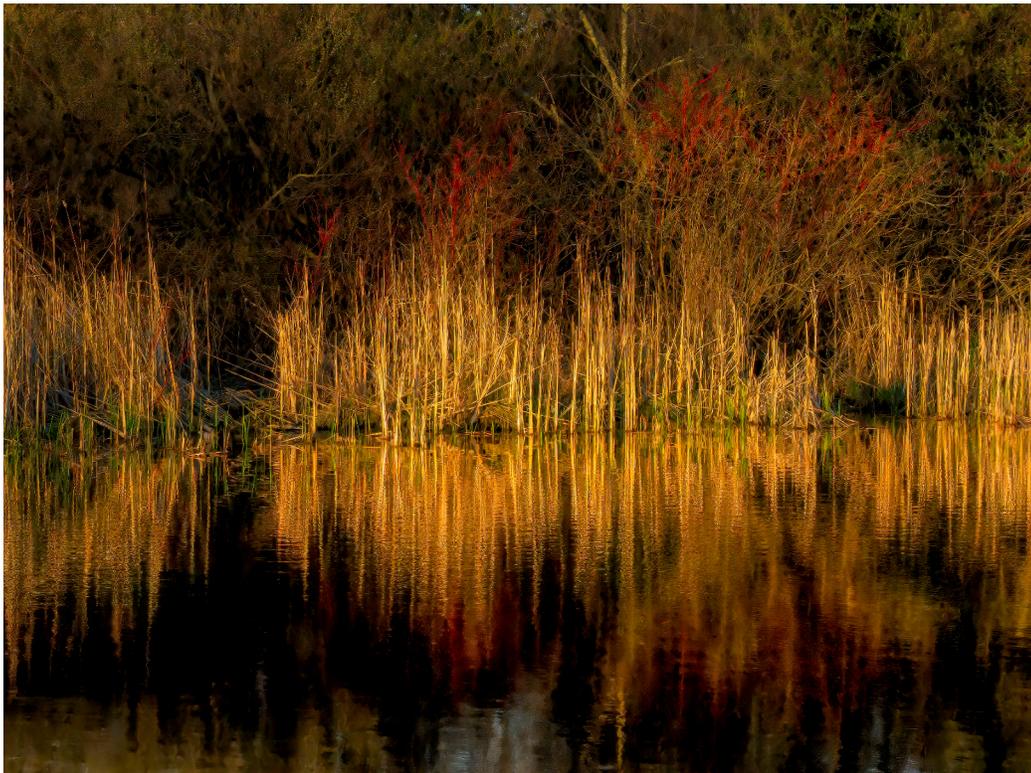




Above: ***Podophyllum peltatum*** Nancy Vander Plaats

Below ***Radiant Reflection***

Peter Marmorek



A Mother's Love

Sung by Karen Richards

To listen, [just click here](#)

(Songwriters: Mackinnon Steven James / Sky Amy)

Thank you for watching over me
All of the sleepless nights you lay awake
Thank you for knowing when to hold me close
When to let me go
Thank you for every stepping stone
And for the path that always leads me home
I thank you for the time you took
To see the heart inside of me
You gave me the roots to start this life
And then you gave me wings to fly
And I learned to dream
Because you believed in me
There's no power like it on this earth
No treasure equal to its worth
The gift of a mother's love
Thank you for every sunlit day
That filled the corners of my memory
Thank you for every selfless unsung deed
I know you did for me
Thank you for giving me the choice
To search my soul till I could find my voice
And I thank you for teaching me
To be strong enough to bend
You gave me the roots to start this life
And then you gave me wings to fly
And I learned to dream
Because you believed in me
There's no power like it on this earth
No treasure equal to its worth
The gift of a mother's love
I thank God for a mother's love

The Sound Page

Nature Walk Meditation

Kurt Thomsen

For the times that we wish to escape city life, but cannot. Here is a meditation for you. To listen, [just click here](#)

She Who Hears the Cries of the World

chant by Jennifer Berezan
To listen, [just click here](#)

performed by Susanne Maziarz

Divertissement 5: The Brick Works

 Peter Marmorek  Susanne Maziarz

To listen, [just click here](#)



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