Afternoon Discoveries: November 1, 2026

Emerging Writers, Debuts, & Reading Worth Revisiting

AMONG THE LETTERS
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Emerging Writers, Debuts, & Reading Worth Revisiting

Today's edition belongs to writers near the start of the road. A tired social worker goes quiet while her houseplants learn to speak in her voice, two philosophy students bury a red-tailed hawk, and a son takes his mother out for pizza and an impossible dream of Italy. Several pieces come from prize lists and small magazines that champion new voices, including the first

London Literary Prizes from The Temz Review in Ontario. The back shelf offers three conversations with debut authors and three famous early works by Dickens, Twain, and Leacock.

All links in today's edition were checked against the linked publication, magazine, or publisher page on November 1, 2026.

Featured Discovery

The Green Echo - Uzma Kadri

Eleanor spends her days in family reunification work, measuring every word she offers to struggling parents. By evening her voice feels used up, so the houseplants in her condo begin speaking for her, first reminding her about the dry cleaning and then finishing her sentences. Soon her husband, Ben, is confiding in the fiddle-leaf fig, and it answers in her own kinder voice. Uzma Kadri's eerie and tender story won the international prose prize in The Temz Review's inaugural London Literary Prizes. It is a quiet fable about exhaustion, love, and slowly turning green.

Read "The Green Echo" at The Temz Review

The Discovery Desk

Featherweight - Davin Faris

At seven on a Tuesday morning, two sophomore philosophy students hear something strike the glass of a study room their college calls the Fishbowl. In the courtyard they find a red-tailed hawk dying at the base of the window. Davin Faris, a student at St. John's College in Annapolis, follows their small funeral and the week of reading about birds and omens that comes after. His essay moves from Socrates to Aeschylus and back to the creek where the hawk was laid to rest. It is a luminous piece of nonfiction about grief, attention, and witness.

Read "Featherweight" at The Masters Review

Cold Pizza - Scott Bolendz

Every week a son takes his ninety-three-year-old mother to lunch at Vito's, where she usually loves the Margherita pizza. Today she declares it terrible and pulls a few torn magazine pages about Italy from her handbag. She has always wanted to go, and her illness means she forgets each time he explains why she cannot. Scott Bolendz, a fine art photographer who also writes flash fiction, keeps every gesture small and exact. The ending is a gentle and heartbreaking act of love.

Read "Cold Pizza" at Fictive Dream

Stuck in the Traffic Circle - Caroline Kalfas

More than ten years after her husband's death, a widow drives his olive brown RAV-4 through the new traffic circle near the post office almost

every day. Their sons once planted daffodil bulbs at its centre while wearing their Scout uniforms. The flowers bloom each spring around the anniversary of his death, and she circles again and again to see them. Caroline Kalfas, an MFA graduate who writes from Woolwich Township, New Jersey, fits a whole marriage into this tiny story. It is quiet, sad, and full of light.

Read “Stuck in the Traffic Circle” at SmokeLong Quarterly

Dual Income, No Kids - Kimmy Chang

A woman who works from home lies back in the dentist’s chair while her dentist talks about wanting six children. When the dentist guesses that she and her husband are DINKs, the narrator does not know the term and can only nod around the instruments. The cleaning carries her back to a miscarried baby brother, a locked bedroom door, and a father who demanded grandchildren and skipped her wedding. Kimmy Chang, a Texas poet and computer vision engineer, packs a family history into a single appointment. It is precise, wry, and quietly devastating.

Read “Dual Income, No Kids” at Emerge Literary Journal

Thank you for spending some time with this afternoon’s edition. Below this point are six more stories and essays from new and emerging voices, three conversations with debut authors, and three famous early works worth revisiting.

Special Recommendations can be found near the bottom of the article.

More From the Discovery Desk

For Better, For Worse - Rachel Lachmansingh

The chickens die on the same morning Lindy announces that she has married Malcolm, the shy boy next door. Both of them are freshly eighteen, and her mother can only sit and stare. A year earlier, Lindy's father was shot dead in his cabin outside Laval, and the case was never solved. Since then Lindy has quietly collected photos of the crime scene, and her mother has started watching her closely. Rachel Lachmansingh, a Guyanese-Canadian writer from Toronto, builds this rural Ontario story toward a startling final reckoning.

Read "For Better, For Worse" at The Temz Review

Yin to My Yang - Andrea Damic

Two gap-toothed first graders, one with straight brown hair and one with wild red curls, become inseparable. One loses her father, and the other learns the meaning of shilly-shally while hiding at the top of the stairs as her parents fight. Andrea Damic tells their story as a chain of what-ifs, each one circling closer to a quiet betrayal between their families. Born in Sarajevo and now living in Sydney, Damic published her debut collection earlier this year. This flash piece is a lovely elegy for a friendship cut short.

Read "Yin to My Yang" at Fictive Dream

Three to Five Business Days - Sarah Banks

As a first-year nurse, Sarah Banks once told a frightened patient that the weekend would fly by while he waited for biopsy results. Eleven years later she is the one waiting, after her gynecologist finds a large cyst on her ovary. Banks braids the two stories together with the rules of therapeutic communication she now teaches to nursing students. Slowly she learns what it means to listen without offering false comfort. Her essay is honest, generous, and deeply humane.

Read “Three to Five Business Days” at JMWW

The Hunter: A New Myth - Sveta Yefimenko

Thousands of years ago, in a village by the sea, a young fisherman is content with his small life of nets, shells, and evening meetings. Then the fish stop coming, the floods begin, and the Magician walks into the sea carrying the wisdom stone and never returns. With the village starving, the warriors decide that its young men must learn to hunt. Sveta Yefimenko, a scholar of classical reception, writes in the clear cadence of an ancient tale. Her story asks what a community loses when it learns to kill.

Read “The Hunter: A New Myth” at The Temz Review

Gideon - Rowen Jennings

In a small town, people have begun losing their faces piece by piece, starting with a woman who lives behind the gas station. The children watch from a distance until a seventh grader named Gideon loses an eye, then an ear, and then stops coming to school. Rowen Jennings, a Black trans writer from upstate New York, turns this strange affliction into a story about the adults who fail children. Meanwhile the narrator’s

own home grows quieter and more unsettling. It is an eerie and memorable piece of speculative fiction.

Read “Gideon” at The Masters Review

Counterpoint - Mary Ann McGuigan

In the entry hall of a Bronx apartment building, two teenage brothers sing “All I Have to Do Is Dream” in tight harmony. Their little sister sits on the marble steps and sings along until Sean finally waves her over. Mary Ann McGuigan remembers how music gave a struggling family brief relief, from a cousin’s Confirmation party to her own first wedding. The brothers kept their feelings out of sight, yet they made room for her voice. This short memoir is warm, musical, and wise about belonging.

Read “Counterpoint” at Emerge Literary Journal

Beyond the First Shelf

Kathleen Carr Foster: Trust Yourself and Keep Writing - Robert Lee Brewer with Kathleen Carr Foster

Kathleen Carr Foster’s debut novel, The Jewel of Corlivo, came out from Erewhon Books on October 27. In this Writer’s Digest interview with Robert Lee Brewer, she explains how she set aside a novel that had

become a chore and followed an image that arrived as she was falling asleep. That image was a candlelit dinner on a mountain terrace in a world inspired by early Byzantium. Foster also describes the long road from first draft to agent to publication. Her closing advice gives the interview its title.

Read “Kathleen Carr Foster” at Writer’s Digest

Writer’s Block: Maggie Burton - All Lit Up with Maggie Burton

Maggie Burton is a violinist, medical student, former municipal politician, and mother of four in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador. Her debut poetry collection, Chores, won the 2024 Canadian First Book Prize from the Griffin Poetry Prize. In this All Lit Up interview, she discusses A Temporary Grace, her new book of short stories from Breakwater Books. She talks about forgiveness, the storytelling women of Brigus who raised her, and the writers who shaped her prose. It is a lively introduction to a distinctive Canadian voice.

Read “Writer’s Block: Maggie Burton” at All Lit Up

Meg Charlton on Shared Realities, Alien Encounters, and the Making of Voyagers - Adam Vitcavage with Meg Charlton

Adam Vitcavage, who runs the Debutiful newsletter and podcast, says Meg Charlton’s Voyagers would top his list of the year’s debuts. In this edited conversation, Charlton talks about the instability of the self, a childhood spent reading the dictionary at breakfast, and finding the right MFA program. She also explains how her agent helped her find the shape of a novel about friendship and aliens. The talk is thoughtful,

funny, and full of reading suggestions. It is a generous look at how a first novel comes together.

Read “Meg Charlton on Shared Realities” at Debutiful

Special Recommendations

Mr. Minns and His Cousin - Charles Dickens

Augustus Minns is a tidy bachelor clerk who loathes two things above all, dogs and children. His cousin Octavius Budden, hoping to win favour for his young son, invites him to Sunday dinner at a cottage near Stamford Hill. Everything goes wrong, from a dog clawing at the curtains to endless toasts and a last coach that leaves without him. Dickens first published this story in 1833 as “A Dinner at Poplar Walk,” and it was his first appearance in print. It is the comic seed of a great career.

Read “Mr. Minns and His Cousin” at Wikisource

The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County - Mark Twain

In the tavern of a fading mining camp, the garrulous Simon Wheeler is asked about one Leonidas W. Smiley and instead launches into the tale of Jim Smiley, who would bet on anything. Smiley’s prized frog, Dan’l Webster, can outjump any frog in the county until a stranger quietly fills

it with quail shot. Mark Twain published the sketch in 1865, and it made his name across the country. Two years later it became the title story of his first book. It is still one of the funniest tall tales in American writing.

Read “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” at Wikisource

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My Financial Career - Stephen Leacock

A young man whose salary has just risen to fifty dollars a month walks into a bank to open an account and immediately loses his nerve. He asks to see the manager alone, and the alarmed manager assumes he must be a detective. Things only get worse, as fifty-six dollars travel in and out of the bank in a single humiliating visit. Stephen Leacock’s sketch opens Literary Lapses, his first book of humour, published in Montreal in 1910. This Canadian classic is still painfully funny for anyone who has ever felt rattled at a wicket.

Read “My Financial Career” at Wikisource

Thank you for spending part of your day among the letters with us.

Many of today’s writers are early in their careers, and their work already carries real weight. A condo full of plants, a college courtyard, a pizza place, and a dentist’s chair all become places where people face what they cannot say aloud. The classics remind us that even Dickens, Twain, and Leacock once had a first story. We hope you find a new name to follow today and an old favourite worth revisiting.

I hope one of today’s pieces gives you somewhere worth staying for a while.

Take care!