# Afternoon Discoveries: November 15, 2026

Emerging Writers, Debuts, & Reading Worth Revisiting

AMONG THE LETTERS
NOV 15, 2026




## Emerging Writers, Debuts, & Reading Worth Revisiting

*A mother crosses Long Island Sound with her small daughter, hoping a crowded room might speak her son's name. Today's emerging and debut voices come from The Masters Review, Fictive Dream, Necessary Fiction, JMWW, Pithead Chapel, and Cleaver. In the paid section, a secondhand blouse keeps another life folded inside it, a house listens during an open house, and*

*a monastery page grows larger than the room. The back shelf brings two conversations with prize-winning new writers, a review of stories from Mexico City, and a return visit to Mariposa, Saki, and Chekhov.*

*All links in today's edition were checked against the linked publication, magazine, or publisher page on November 15, 2026.*

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# Featured Discovery

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## The Traveler's Stone - Erin Jean

The narrator is on a ferry in the middle of Long Island Sound, crossing to see a famous psychic whose book taught her that butterflies are signs from the dead. This was years ago, and also yesterday, and also happening now. At a rented cottage, a cloud of black swallowtails greets the family, and her two-year-old shouts with delight. Erin Jean, an MFA candidate at Bennington whose writing was reborn after the loss of her newborn son, maps grief with patience and care. The stone of the title becomes a way to keep travelling toward him.

Read "The Traveler's Stone" at The Masters Review

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# The Discovery Desk

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## Three Porpoises - Sarah Masters

She is carrying a load of washing when her husband calls out about the sea. He is waiting to go back to the home, too thin under a blanket, and she still has lunch to cook and the pharmacy to phone. Then his eyes light up as he remembers champagne on deck and a dress she wore, and a small voice tells her to put the laundry down. Sarah Masters, who lives in York and teaches English to speakers of other languages, lets the memory of three porpoises return just in time. The last shared jump is quietly beautiful.

Read “Three Porpoises” at Fictive Dream

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## A Town of Cherry Pits - Pegah Ouji

Zahra piles cherry pits into a little town on the kitchen floor while her mother makes jam and writes labels for the ruby jars. Outside, a radio talks of soldiers, and a siren sends them running to the shelter, where even a stern neighbour turns soft. Later she will try to keep her small town safe as the war comes closer to the street. Pegah Ouji, a PEN America Emerging Voices fellow who writes in Farsi and English, sets childhood wonder against ordinary danger. The story is tender, exact, and hard to shake.

Read “A Town of Cherry Pits” at The Masters Review

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## i go apple picking. - Meg White

He always drives, in the car his mother bought him, along winding roads built for sad songs. She knows those roads as well as the ones behind her childhood home, and she knows his silences too. After a bitter

stretch between them, she walks into an orchard, bites an apple that tastes like evening air, and watches his headlights hesitate. Meg White keeps the voice close and sure. It is a debut that knows when to stay and when to go.

Read “i go apple picking.” at Necessary Fiction

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## The Golden Age/El Siglo Del Oro - Alex Talgar

The narrator grows up seeing the world through the holes in carriage wheels, travelling with Papa and selling wares for escudo dreams. There is always one coin left over, shaped like a mother and spent too fast to reckon. Years later the coins become two, then three, as the pace of the journey finally slows enough to read the names on bullfighting posters. Alex Talgar, a 2026 finalist for the Adina Talve-Goodman Fellowship, writes this short life in a voice that feels both old and newly found. It is a compact, memorable debut.

Read “The Golden Age/El Siglo Del Oro” at JMWW

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*Thank you for spending some time with this afternoon’s edition. Below this point are six more stories from emerging and established voices, three conversations and a review from the new-writers shelf, and three special recommendations worth revisiting.*

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

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# More From the Discovery Desk

## Maybe Someday - Liz Rose Shulman

In her twenties, the narrator finds a black velvet top sandwiched between a yellow dress and a pink striped skirt at a secondhand shop. She is only browsing, the way you do when you still think you have all the time in the world. Later she wonders about the woman who wore those wide straps and the zipper down the back, and about the full life folded into a donated bag. Liz Rose Shulman, a Chicago teacher and author of Good Jewish Girl, was selected for Best Emerging Writers 2025. The piece looks gently backward and ahead at once.

Read “Maybe Someday” at The Masters Review

## Showing - Dana Wall

The house has been shown four hundred times and bought twice, and it knows within ten seconds which visitors are lying to themselves. Buyers perform ease in the entry while the floors feel the strain of people who do not yet belong. Then a mother and child arrive, and for a moment the hard work of looking stops. Dana Wall, winner of Columbia Journal’s 2025 Online Fiction Contest, gives the house a voice that is wry, lonely, and finally moved. The last offer is made not to the agent but to the rooms themselves.

Read “Showing” at Pithead Chapel

## Novembers - Graham Mort

The children of a Lancashire neighbourhood long for the fifth of November, for parkin, treacle toffee, and maple peas in newspaper with pepper and vinegar. On the night itself, sparks die around the guy, and faces grow unrecognisable in the heat and the cold. They do not yet think of the veterans who stay indoors with frightened dogs. Graham Mort writes the festival as a brief, tribal fire against the winter ahead. It is a rich seasonal read, full of taste and smoke.

Read “Novembers” at Fictive Dream

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## Initials - Barbara Tutino Parker

Carved into the curb across the street are an E and a B with a plus and a heart between them. The narrator first notices the letters after the last snow melts, then means to show them off, then lets ordinary days get in the way. Street-cleaning fades the marks, but a red sneaker can still find the curve of the heart. Barbara Tutino Parker, born in Rome and now living in Brooklyn with her husband E and their two boys, turns a sidewalk secret into a love story. By Tuesday, E plus B will equal heart again.

Read “Initials” at Cleaver

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## The Brothers - Clare Fielder

In a small monastery hewn from a cliff, a scribe works on a page that will not stay a page. Leaves are gummed to every edge until the manuscript is larger than the desk, then larger than the floor, and the painted animals seem to look him in the eye. The brothers before him planted the garden and watched the same sea. Clare Fielder, a Sheffield writer with an MFA from Columbia, asks how faith and obsession share a room. The closing warning to look up arrives just as the waves reach the door.

Read “The Brothers” at The Masters Review

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## Owl - Brandon McNeice

A barely known relative once gave the narrator, at nine or ten, the gift of sponsoring an owl. He would never see, touch, or hear from the bird, and the arrangement felt both generous and strangely distant, the sort of present explained by a first name and a direction at a holiday table. The flash piece follows what such a gift can mean years later. Brandon McNeice writes the memory with humour and a light, lingering ache. It is a small story that opens onto a larger sky.

Read “Owl” at Cleaver

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# Beyond the First Shelf

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## Interview with the Winner: Lei Wang - Brandon Williams with Lei Wang

Charles Yu chose Lei Wang’s How to Begin a Love Story as first place in The Masters Review Prize for New Narratives. In this conversation, recorded after a week at the Clarion workshop she calls science nerd camp for adults, Wang talks about learning how a story works, online quizzes, and the usefulness of faking it until it feels true. She describes arriving from ideas-driven nonfiction and having to put actual people on

the page. Brandon Williams keeps the questions practical and kind. It is a generous look at a debut in motion.

Read “Interview with the Winner: Lei Wang” at The Masters Review

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## Interview with the Winner: Annie Bartos - Cole Meyer with Annie Bartos

Annie Bartos talks with Cole Meyer about the found and erased materials behind Stories and Stakes in a Noisy Democracy, the second-place essay in the same prize, judged by Charles Yu. She describes starting the piece after her MFA, hunting through transcripts, and feeling spellbound by what the record already held. The interview then turns toward the projects now simmering, from braided essays to a possible novel. Bartos is clear about beginning with something factual and stretching toward the imagined. Readers who like process will find plenty to borrow.

Read “Interview with the Winner: Annie Bartos” at The Masters Review

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## Book Review: Upflow by Diego Gerard Morrison - Hantian Zhang

Hantian Zhang reviews Upflow, a short story collection set around Mexico City and published by Split/Lip Press. Morrison opens by asking readers to follow the city’s water as it is pumped uphill and sent back out as waste, then lets rain, drought, sewage, and stolen stores run through the book. Zhang, a National Book Critics Circle Emerging Critics Fellow, is honest about stories that feel cut short, and still finds the collection a success. Water here becomes a way of bringing buried histories back into view. It is a thoughtful guide to a new book.

Read “Book Review: Upflow by Diego Gerard Morrison” at The Masters Review

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## Special Recommendations

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### The Marine Excursions of the Knights of Pythias - Stephen Leacock

It is excursion day in Mariposa, and the steamer is ready at half past six of a summer morning. Nearly everybody in town seems to belong to the Knights of Pythias, and the lake is waiting just beyond the wharf. Stephen Leacock follows the packed boat, the uniforms, and the small flasks with the same affectionate comedy that runs through Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town. The chapter is sociable, precise, and very funny. It is a perfect Canadian classic to revisit on a Sunday afternoon.

Read “The Marine Excursions of the Knights of Pythias” at Project Gutenberg

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### The Open Window - Saki

A very self-possessed young lady of fifteen tells Framton Nuttel that he must try to put up with her until her aunt comes down. Then she offers a calm explanation for the open window, and the visitor, already nervous, begins to look at the lawn with new unease. Saki’s famous short story turns manners into a quiet trap, sprung with perfect timing. The comedy

is dry and still sharp more than a century later. It remains a model of how little a short story needs in order to startle.

Read “The Open Window” at Wikisource

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## An Artist’s Story - Anton Chekhov

A landscape painter is staying in a crumbling country house, sleeping on a wide sofa and doing almost nothing, when he meets two sisters on a neighbouring estate. One is devoted to practical work in the village, and the other walks with him through the fields until a small happiness seems possible. Constance Garnett’s translation keeps Chekhov’s long, still afternoons intact. The house with the mezzanine lingers after the painter is sent away. It is a story worth sitting with on a late Sunday.

Read “An Artist’s Story” at Project Gutenberg

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

*Many of today’s pieces keep company with memory, from a ferry ride toward a missing son to a husband’s last clear story of the sea. Others find new lives in secondhand clothes, in a house that listens, and in a first published walk through an orchard. New voices and old favourites share the same table here. We hope a few of these pages keep you company this Sunday.*

*Take care!*