

Sweet π Old Space

ONE

He sat in the dark planetarium with small company, a pathetic break from life on earth. The overture began, then stars lit on eighth notes and the firmament grew melodic themes. It was *Sweet π Old Space*, a musical in the American tradition. Characters appeared, scaffolded, on the horizon—faint, but visible in the moonglow of lighting design. They sang softly the opening lines of the chorus:

*sweet π old space
receive the human race
sweet π old space
don't let us be erased*

*good-bye home place
carrion and the waste
good-bye home place
we couldn't live with grace*

*cosmic cold case
without name without face
cosmic cold case
not a sound not a trace*

*sweet π old space
receive the human race
sweet π old space
don't let us be erased*

Two: BEING AIR (FOR 6 VOICES)

#1	grapheme	graphene	geiger	eigen
#2	hamiltonian	hamiltonian	hamiltonian	hamiltonian
#3	hello	halo	halo	haploid
#4	computability	computability	computability	computability
#5		we are	they are	
#6		imperial	imperial	imperial

#1	aaron	axon	error	ergo
#2		Hamiltonian	hamiltonian	
#3	astroid	diploid	hoplite	basal
#4		computability	computability	computability
#5	cossack	Iraq	racial	spatial
#6		imperial	imperial	imperial

#MikeBarrett	grapheme	grapheme	grapheme
hamiltonian	hamiltonian	hamiltonian	hamiltonian
tidal	hello	halo	halo
computability	computability	computability	computability
gender	gamer	we are	they are
imperial	imperial	imperial	imperial

#1	axon	axon	haploid	tidal	they are	they are
#2	haltonian		diploid			
#3	halo	hello	haploid	basal	tidal	we are
#4			diploid	computability	they are	
#5		haploid		racial		we are
#6	imperial	diploid	eigen		they are	

#1	Cossack	imperial	error	hello
#2	Iraq	hamiltonian		hello
#3	Gamer	computability	error	hello
#4	Gender	hamiltonian		hello
#5	Iraq	computability	error	hello
#6	Cossack	imperial		hello

Soloist

*remember autumnal pelican lake
the drama of bird wings stroked in the sky
that day all day breathing air that day being air*

*remember ideologue of baby cakes
cohort in a warm bed asleep
(one other, i will not forget my mother)*

*remember sickness and mortal wounds
the body in bureaucracy
cost of oxygen it takes to live*

*that day all day breathing air that day being air
that day all day breathing air that day being air*

THREE

The words were heavy, abstract; he loved their mindrhymes, though, the polyvocal choreography of human voices.

This social beauty thrilled him, but he was spent, and the words were heavy, abstract. When “Breathing Air” ended, he lost track of the plot. Weary, he rested his eyes. In the time it took to shut his lids, a memory filled his consciousness, visible in that darkness.

Early dusk he had started on the gravel path of a re-purposed bed of the Missouri Kansas Texas Railroad. That chronic vagus nerve pain of social disconnection plagued him, but his houndfellow was good folk to walk with.

After a few minutes he veered off the path into the Diana Bend Conservation Area. The orange-gold, red-brown leaves blossomed on trees and crackled underfoot. He climbed to the top of a levee, occasionally mown but mud-truck rutted; the season had trapped the way with Cockleburs, thorns, and Showy *diploid* Tick Trefoil *haploid*.

As he gripped his hiking stick he read the words tattooed on his hand *pain pain pain* (sans-serif in black ink).

The Missouri River *hamiltonian* appeared on his left flowing toward Cooper’s Landing—*There is no lamentation* he said to himself in the cool, cooling air *no lamentation in the house of those who serve the muse*.

Light dimmed. He could just read his map *computability* and check his watch *pain pain pain*. If he followed the levee, then turned north he could rejoin the old trainbed and easily manage the dark.

Dusk went down past the river bottom oaks and cottonwoods; he saw pink and thermal red

hues through branches. Above him slate gray deepened into black.

The wind picked up from the south ahead of the Mexican Hurricane rain he was eager to feel. There had been a drought since mid-July. The night before, the nearly full moon wore a halo, auguring rain.

A few weeks back, carp were dying in the shallow water of Pelican Lake. Turkey Hawks, Blue Herons, and migrating American Pelicans fed on those fish when the Missouri River returned to its channel. Now the lake was completely dry.

Yip yap yip yap yip. Coyotes!

He knew where the coyotes were—west from where he stood—Davisdale. The trailhead sat at the back of the godly Baptist cemetery across Salt Creek. He found an arrowhead there *we are imperial* then buried it beneath a birchwood for the future to dig up.

Yip yap yip yap yip. His houndfellow looked at him. “Don’t worry houndfellow,” he said, even as a thin line of fear cracked down his body.

But the map was true, before it turned pitch black he stepped, relieved, onto the gravel trail. He couldn’t see much except when passing glowing white limestone bluffs.

His car was about a mile away. Just ahead was a tunnel the length of a football field. It had been blown into the bluffs above Moniteau Creek. Lewis and Clark noted pictographs there, drawn by the Osage *racial imperial*.

The arthritic pain in his knees and ankles had eased and the vagus nerve calmed. He had walked five miles. The air cleared his lungs and the space cleared his mind.

Seated in that dark planetarium, in the time it took for his lids to close, this memory came to its conclusion: When he reached the end of the

tunnel, he stepped into blue light—the moon lit by the faraway sun he had just seen sink into the horizon. In the time it took for him to close his eyes in his seat, he saw stretched out above him *Sweet π Old Space.*