

Sweet & Sour

by Doug Bond

Since the divorce had gone final, the matter settled once and for all, he'd taken to a masochistic bingo of sorts. He wanted to digest it wholly, move it on, much as he'd down psyllium caps to pass a prosciutto, mortadella, and fried eggplant sub taken on in a weak moment. He emptied a thin, stainless steel canister and placed scribbled notes inside, a dozen of the sweetest memories he carried of their long, but in the end wilting romance. Every two weeks he'd pull out another scrap, like teasing noodles out of a steaming hot pot.

That's how he found himself in the skinny blocks north of Columbia, frantically pacing upper Broadway for the little place they used to trundle off to in the late light on frosty winter days for fresh baked cookies, bags of still warm granola, and tangerine sodas.

"Well! Where the fuck is it?" he said to himself, enough times now that he was saying it out loud and loudly, too.

It was frosty cold, just as he remembered. In his left coat pocket, he tumbled the ring she'd given back until his hand grew damp with sweat. Ring wasn't worth much. He heard it again. His fingers worked the jagged crown of the small stone and the smooth round band as he crisscrossed Broadway to Riverside Drive and back again under the elevated tracks.

The play of the cars, the overhead train, his zigging and zagging from one side to the other, scanning up and down the sentry blocks grown unfamiliar, left him dizzy and unsteady. Then, a corner spot where the black steel stairs descended from the platform gave him promise. He picked up a waft of garlic and tensed his grip, turning the corner, reaching out to look inside the steamed up window.

