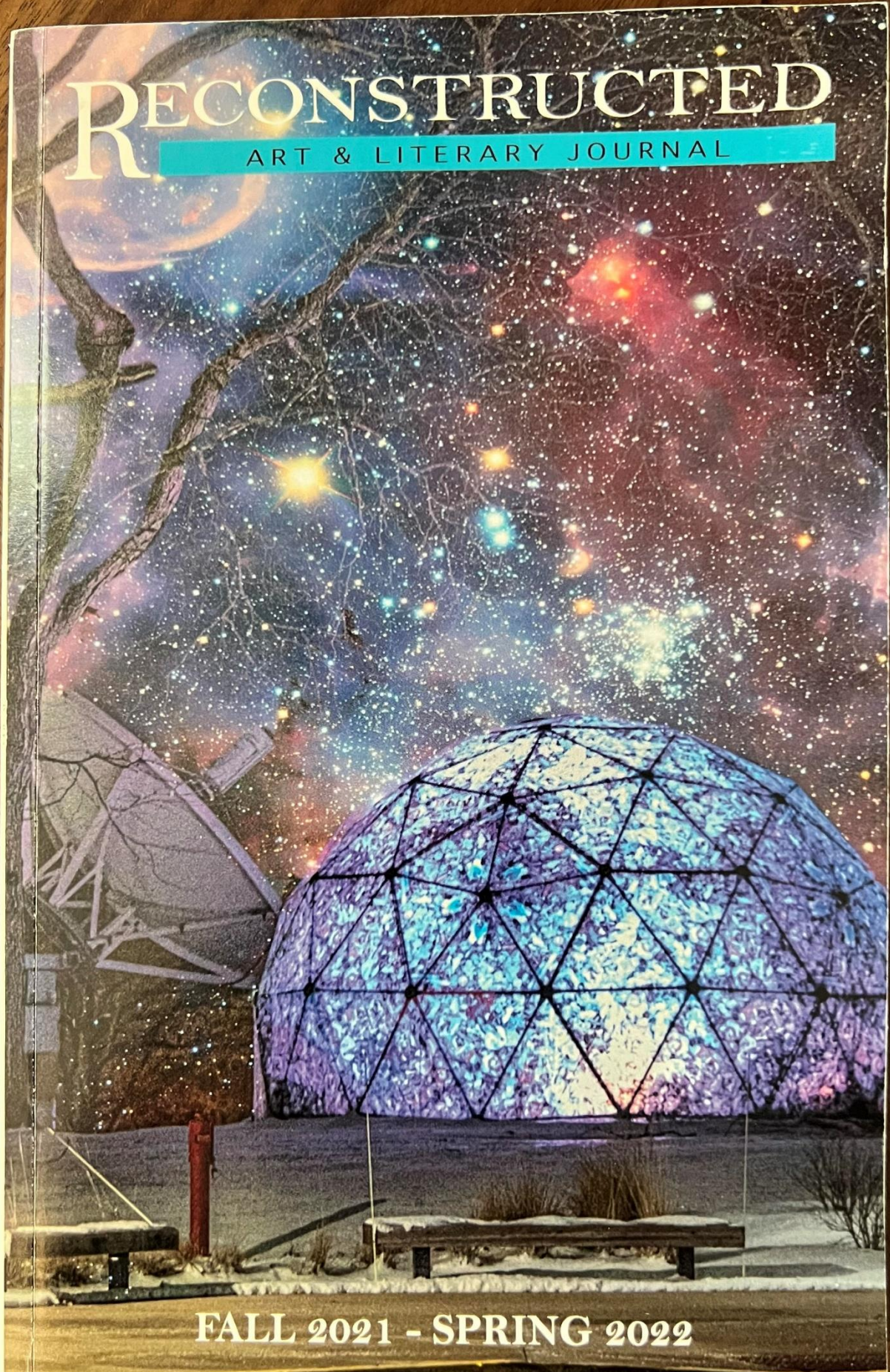


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Later That Night

Alexis Smith

Spilled champagne trails from its toppled flute into the white carpet beside the crackling fireplace. Flame light dances against velvet petals strewn across Egyptian cotton.

Slightly melted chocolate stains embroidered-trim pillowcases.

There's chocolate in your hair and smeared across your parted lips; chocolate pressed into my wrist and the swell of my breast.

I peel my cramped fingers from around your neck. Your widened eyes, once hungry, now lifeless, stare up at me.

I wipe away your Hershey's kisses before taking a drag from my still-lit cigarette, then blow its rolling smoke at the room's 'No Smoking' sign.

I've always *hated* chocolate.