

A collection of vintage televisions in a dark room. The central television is the most prominent, displaying a pixelated title. Other televisions in the background show various colorful patterns like horizontal and vertical stripes. The scene is lit with soft, colorful glows from the screens.

A Very  
Special  
Episode

nathan dueck

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## Advance Praise for *A Very Special Episode*

“Television was a childhood companion for many of us, and the loving, sometimes complicated, investment we put into those characters comes through in *A Very Special Episode*. dueck plays with formal construction and forms that allude specifically and often hilariously to poems from the canon. But these poems are about cartoons and wrestling and commercials and *Care Bears*. Attuned to the specific relevance, joy and pervasiveness of the pop culture that is our culture this collection shows us the ways these trademarks are imprinted on us, are a part of home. As a result we must ask ourselves what it means. Laughs! Games! Serious contemplation! This collection has it all. This book is a delight.”

– Dina Del Bucchia, author of *It’s a Big Deal!*

“Language is a cult. Pop culture is a language. And here dueck is a cult-leading pop-culture language mixmaster, fashioning poems bright as TV, casting strange and true shadows over our real and hyperreal bodies, illuminating our world with its uncanny undulations and strange flashes. He knows that life is the ultimate in binge-watching. So are our brains. dueck’s poems broadcast on all the channels at once, channelling and challenging with technical finesse and flash. He’s embedded himself in the broadband of the now, streaming his incisive and witty 5G reports from inside the contemporary ever-flickering dream machine, the motherboard of all our best and most notorious fantasies.”

– Gary Barwin, author of *No TV for Woodpeckers*

“nathan dueck takes nostalgic faves like *DuckTales*, *Pac-Man* and the greatest invention of our time – the ThighMaster – and twist/turns them into playful works that slide off the tongue. Like looking at a time capsule of pop culture through a kaleidoscope, this book is a reminder that poetry can be fun like Saturday morning cartoons.”

– Daniel Zomparelli, author of *Everything Is Awful and You’re a Terrible Person*

A VERY SPECIAL EPISODE

Also by nathan dueck

*he'll*

*king's(mère)*



A  
Very  
Special  
Episode



brought to you by  
**nathan dueck**

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for Cal-El,  
who has great powers

A simple black outline of a right-pointing arrow. The arrow is positioned to the right of the text, with its tail on the left and its head pointing towards the right. The text is centered vertically within the arrow's shaft.



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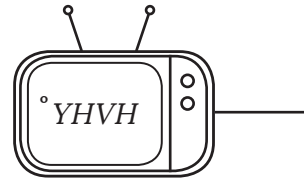


**12 A Very Special Episode**

**ASTRO BOY®S ERROR**

Did you hear Astro Boy®s error  
In his report to the computer  
Geronimo? Is your heart true or  
Do you fear Astro Boy®s error?  
Is he a Frankenstein creature or  
The Tin Woodsman? Is his chest barer?  
Will you share Astro Boy®s error  
In your review on a computer?

## ON PANELS WITH POMEGRANATES AND INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC



Now one of the mistranslated passages said: “Kal-El™ trod upon fire  
Without blemish. From a pillar of cloud on the mount,  
From silver trumpet’s noise, the Tetragrammaton° arises: the desert.”  
Therefore Jimmy bowed down his head and fell to the ground: “The stranger  
From a strange land has entered into the House of El.” He wiped  
His pale cheeks’ freckled spots as he had forgotten manna

And made petition of Kara for an omer of manna.  
“O man,” she interceded, “the skies are adorned with fire  
This day, so thou must not tarry long.” She wiped  
Out the golden pot and lifted up her eyes. The mount  
Seemed to stretch higher. “Without doubt the stranger  
Born on Krypton™ shall lead us all through this wilderness of desert.”

Verily they had not forgotten milk and honey in the desert.  
Kara was examining some cakes to pluck out worms bred in spoilt manna  
When the tent shook and Bizarro stole in. “Peace, stranger!”  
He wore a chain whereupon the words *No one* had been forged in fire  
By alabaster hands. He said, “Henceforth shall those who gaze at the mount  
Forget the Man of Tomorrow™, wounded and healed, unclean and wiped.”

Lois lifted her veil to draw nigh; the soles of her feet wiped  
Holy ground. “Hear my voice,” she cried. “Kal-El™ – the alien, sent into the desert  
One weeping wailing hour in a snare by that brutish, heart-hardened Luthor™, lying in wait to mount  
An assault upon the people of manna –  
In captivity, heard the voice of living fire  
From the midst of the bush that was not burnt, and became a stranger

Sojourning among us. No other stranger  
Hewed stone tablets on which the finger of God wrote, but then wiped  
Away those laws while the camp worshipped the calf of gold moulded with fire.”  
Bizarro clasped her. “Wrath doth wax cold in the desert.”  
“Yea, I can no longer bear to stomach yesterday’s manna,”  
Moaned Jimmy, his churning bowels longing for fullness from the mount.



## 14 A Very Special Episode

Yea, Lois spake forth, although no one gave her ear. And lo the mount  
Shone yellow with the sun going down. "Nothing tastes stranger  
Than the bitterness of my soul," mused Jimmy. "Save for manna  
Which needs be sweetened. Peradventure would Mister Mxyzptlk deliver?" – he wiped  
One nostril eagerly – "Reviled Kltpzyxm would only desert  
Us on Earth-2 to make merry." Quiet at first, flames of fire

Descended upon the mount. They smelled of brimstone fire,  
The stink of spoilt manna. Kal-El™ cowered and wiped  
His tears: the stranger must stay when his people leave the desert.

plod

up teal sod.

In a mushroom, one peacock-blue Smurf™  
occupies his home turf;  
concealing and flaunting himself like

an

eyespot fan.

That magician who stalks *Les Schtroumpfs*™  
from those woods, summons nymphs  
just for some love potions from his

pot,

spilt like plot

twists. Gargamel™ with poisonous self-  
love succumbs to some elf.  
“I’ll get you,” intimidating

the

taupe villa

*De Smurfen*™. So Peyo draws a wife  
from the comics through cartoon life  
of the cels; thereupon artists

link

oil paints, ink-

outlined *Smurfs’ Adventures*™ with sound ef-  
fects synched with Prokofiev  
music, timing each frame-by-frame.

## 16 A Very Special Episode

All  
whimsical  
names like Smurfette™ make up a motif  
dialect, “smurfing grief,”  
all “smurfy,” “smurfish,” “smurfiest”

merch-  
andised smirch  
called Smurf-A-Getti™, Smurf Berry Crunch™ – cough –  
ice shows, theme parks, spinoff  
PVC figurines dipped in

lead.  
Condemned  
alchemy has sold *The Smurfs*™ to spoof  
how licences childproof  
the young. Those culprits age you.

“Rooby-Rooby-Roo” an accent smacks –  
For cels of cartoon humour from the gumshoe crew;  
For burglars all in costume upon a picture tube;  
Van breakdown; meddling kids; ghastly masks;  
Animated and looped – light, layout and glue;  
And áll tráps, the contraptions of Rube.

All choice lingo like “jinkies,” like “zoinks, dude”;  
“Mysteries are scary, Scooby™! (Where are you?)”  
So lose, find; loose, bind; beshadow, show;  
The Greatest Dane whose stress patterns are crude:  
“Ruh-roh.”

## ROBOT WORK

Xanadu's mountain tyrant  
tycoon now shies from gossip columnists for his press;  
his spoils now waste away in piles.  
His bird's a singer. His readers  
inquired into that other woman;  
he's in his bastion.

Jealous of  
the visionary freedom  
in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's opium,  
he burns every  
last missive composed in love,  
and bars entry.

When credits roll –  
you'll hear from the Mercury Theatre,  
those voices known from RKO  
Radio™. The star baritone  
has broadcast through black-and-white jowls.  
The stage light cast through the trap door.

But here yours truly  
will swear by glasses of Paul Masson® wine;  
tongue queued by Pinot Noir cheer,  
I hit my mark on the line.  
After hiding behind my beard  
I've grown unruly.

For an hour  
I sit opposite Merv Griffin  
to talk Houdini. Quiet on set,  
we chew scenery, chinwag chin,  
while my cravat steeps in my sweat. . . .  
Your cold shower.

The surround sound growls,  
“Destiny. You cannot destroy my destiny . . .” I won  
the news-flash war of the Martian swarm,  
as though my breath had done foley. . . .  
I the self transform  
into no one –

toy robot, which tricks  
something-or-other to do his will.  
He menaces some other shill:  
black lined, cartoon thing’s cheeks puff  
about some crystal or stiff stuff  
they called the Leadership Matrix.

I thank Hasbro™  
for funds to finish my next feature –  
an exiled director returns to Hollywood shopping a script.  
He shoots his picture short on dough  
for payroll, when the film rights are stripped  
from an auteur.



## THE SCROOGE

That crotchety McDuck is wont to scrooge  
His confidence from nephews, or fortune,  
And if he chooses the first, seeks refuge  
In thoughts of riches, diving into coin.  
Once *DuckTales*® have all ended, who's to judge?  
Squeeze each penny or drop Dime Number One:  
“Bah! Humbug!” comfort of a private vault,  
Or daily indulgence, nightly insult.

## A TITLE BILLING

Gorging and gorging its tail-hungry core,  
The serpent here refers to Steve Gerber.  
Man-Thing™ burns fear; at his touch cowards die!  
Omega the Unknown™ bursts from the sky;  
This gut-split laugh is burst, so near and far  
That fraternity of ignorance is scorned;  
This jack@\$ takes all credit, while that hack  
@\$hat is given full acknowledgement.

Truly some royalty cheque is past due;  
Truly a Title Billing is past due.  
A Title Billing! Scarcely take those words in,  
Then an absurd soul out of Camus's *L'Étranger*  
Denies our Lord: from the Ben Day-dotted Everglades  
Someone who walks like and swims like and quacks like a duck,  
A deadpan gape and witless as a pun,  
Is flaunting his bare legs, all the while he  
Finds himself "trapped in a world he never made."  
Ruffling every feather; how much we owe  
The candidate of the All-Night Party  
Who hoaxed hairless apes with his voting canard,  
For that coarse fowl, billed in the leading role,  
Plunges under Hollywood to be sold.

MY AFTER SCHOOL HAIKUS

1. ⇨

- New from ABC,
- Watch CBS for
- Now on NBC,
- PBS presents

2.

- a show for the whole family,
- novelist Francine Pascal's
- the Emmy®-nominated
- a tale based on true events,

3.

- “My Life as a God”
- “After All is Said . . .”
- “The School of Heart Blocks”
- “How Could You Say That?”

4.

- Lead Jodie Foster
- Fresh-faced Kirk Cameron
- Young Cheryl Arutt
- Heartthrob Scott Baio

↓

12.

- Brought to you by Mars®
- Sponsored by Clairol®
- All thanks to New! Coke®
- From General Foods®

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MASHH          SHASHHSHASHHSHASH
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11.

- because you'll want to know more!
- for it'll be a feel-good hour!
- because you'll need loved ones close!
- for it'll teach a real lesson!

5.

- plays Joe, a gifted flautist,
- stars as hooded-cloak dork, Lou,
- plays Sam, a nervous gymnast,
- stars as fanny-pack brat, Pat,

6.

- who made regionals.
- who just got high score.
- who earned top honours.
- who took home the prize.

10.

- Don't miss out on this
- Watch this with your kids
- Hurry home to see
- This one is special

- put it in peril.
- turn it all around.
- threaten everything.
- lead to a surprise.

- and an Antarctic plane crash
- as the ozone hole grows could
- and long lines for gas rations
- while the killer bees swarm could

- Still, a pill problem
- But poisoned bonbons
- Only, the wrong crowd
- But dust allergies

7.

↑

9.

8.

←