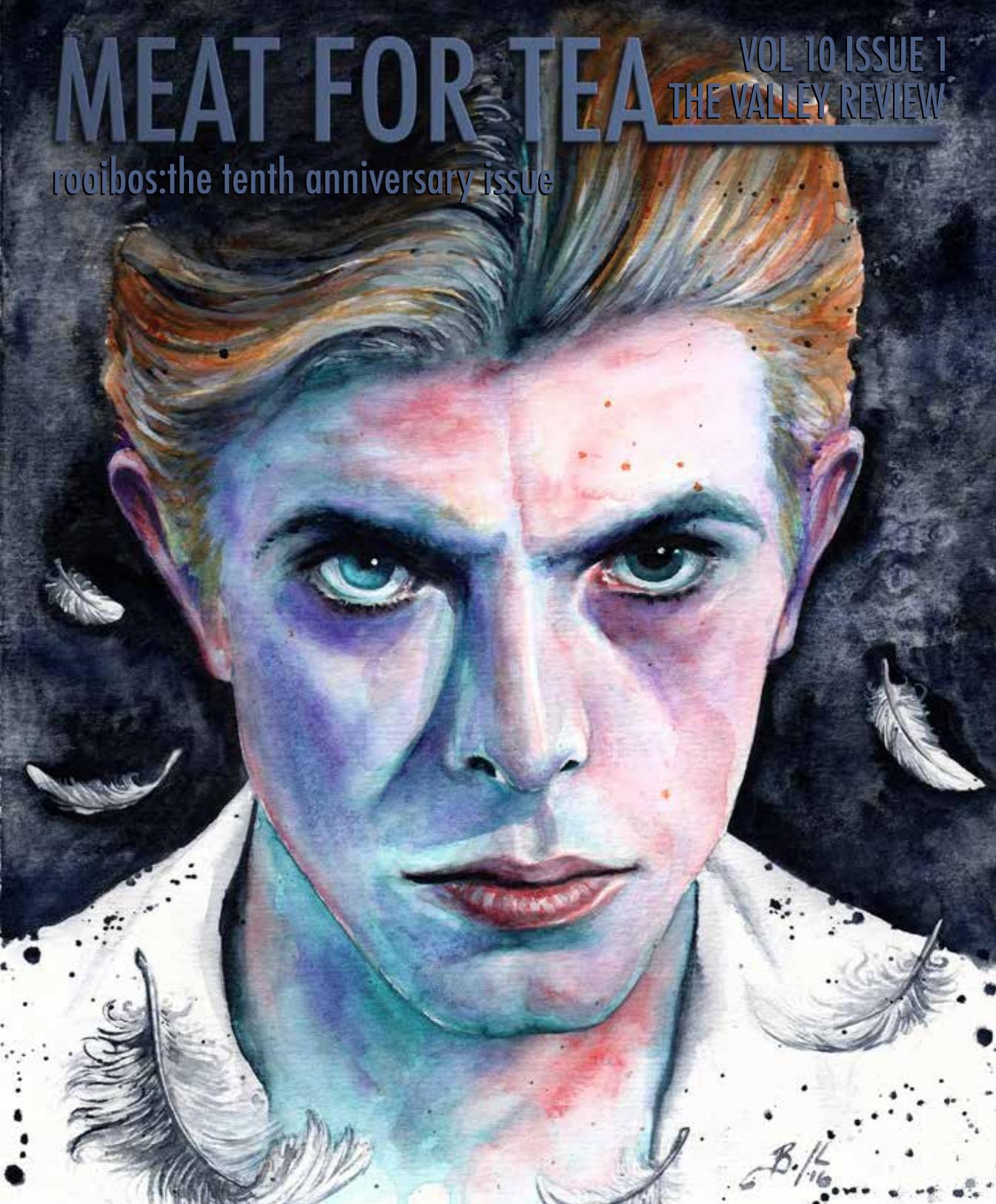


MEAT FOR TEA

VOL 10 ISSUE 1
THE VALLEY REVIEW

rooibos:the tenth anniversary issue



Meat for Tea: The Valley Review

Meat for Tea: The Valley Review was founded by Elizabeth MacDuffie and Alexandra Wagman. We are a non-academic affiliated magazine committed to recognizing and featuring the work of the artists, writers, and musicians living in western Massachusetts and beyond.

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salutations from the staff

Welcome to our Tenth Anniversary issue, Rooibos, piping hot off the press and currently cupped in your hands. Take in the aroma of cinnamon, hibiscus, and eighteen extra pages of top quality, hand-harvested, shade-grown creative content. Even as I sit here at my wood stove slowly warming water to a boil I find myself filled with anticipation, preparing to steep for you, immanent consumer of this steamy mug, a stimulating (naturally caffeine-free) blend of poetry, prose, and artwork. No less nourishing than any fleshy treat, the vanilla, citrus, and mellow tannins of the Rooibos issue will raise your spirits at the dawn of a Tea year. Add honey. Add milk, if you'd like. Sip it, poem to microfiction, a recipe, a print, or slurp it down scalding hot, story after story. It's our biggest issue yet. We recommend a rustic pot and matching tea cup or a bulging, round novelty mug of tasteless worn ceramic, preferably obtained third or fourth hand.

For this very special Cirque, which has taken on as its persona Bowie's "Thin White Duke," we have spoken word, art from Sloan Tomlinson, Kate Bodendorf, Daniel Hales, and J. Andrew World, and music by Beige and Ex-Temper at Sonelab. Thank you all for adding your unique and indispensable flavors.

-Joseph

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hunky dory at an khe

Stefan Lovasik

after the fire fight that day
after the smoke and screams
were sucked back into the jungle
after the dying
the frags collected
the pieces of our brothers
sacredly put into body bags
we had some hours of rest at An Khe
bowie in the boom box
liquor weed and heroin in our veins
the surreal embraced he looked
like lauren bacall on the bootleg cover
we loved it
for the hours we were given we sang along
for the hours we were given he gave us hope
a reason to make it through whatever came next
whatever horrors coming
whatever deaths
whatever changes



the passing of the thin white duke

Connolly Ryan

David Bowie 1/8/47- 1/11/16

Like his fabricated surname
(born mister Jones), his death
cuts into our lives and we bleed.
We bleed condolences and sentiments
and offer meaning to his awful demise.
“I feel like I lost the first person
who ever fully understood me,”
“He was my soul’s uncle,”
confesses the average griever.
And it is, of course, true.
Who knew you so thoroughly
in all stages of your vulnerable
life as the author of “Kooks,”
“Changes,” “Heroes,” “Oh! You Pretty
Things,” “Life On Mars?”
“Sound and Vision,” “Be My Wife,”
“Moonage Daydream,” “Five Years,”
“Rebel, Rebel,” “Fashion,” to name
but an immortal handful?
Saying goodbye to a man like you
is to say hello again to your voice,
your mother-healing, brother-dealing
sister-feeling, father-revealing,
otherworldly, this-worldly voice,
which is very literally everywhere
at once right now: in café’s, bathrooms,
restaurants, airports, cars, classrooms,
weddings, funerals, in people’s heads,
and in the clouds, the moon, the silence,
the sun and of course, more than ever,
in the Ziggy-zagging zeitgeist of stardust.

Stardust to stardust
and ashes to ashes...
Your limber body has left the building
but your nimble mind is budding yet:
Meanwhile:
“I’m stuck with a valuable friend.
I’m happy. Hope you’re happy, too.”



geraniums

Eleanor Lane

A woman died under the window box
and the geraniums ate her soul through the warped wood,
blooming in exposed-vein anguish,
red flowers bright enough to bruise the air around them.

Little girl, she once pressed the red petals of her mother's rose geranium
like war paint across the ridge of her cheek. Later,
when her perennial ex sent her roses, she tore them to spindly shreds of red,
their sickly cloying flesh under her fingernails.
He wouldn't give her a plant still growing, only the cut stalks,
laying out his fondness for dying things.

One day too late she saw what she'd yoked herself to.
He was the tick on a wolf's neck.
There was always a cocktail of blood between them,
and she died like a wolf among flowers, sucked dry at the artery,
waiting for morning to wash the dark from her grizzled grey hair.



women arrested for indecent exposure in girls gone wild sting

Eleanor Lane

Woman:

An adult female human being
without the qualification of girl, a flimsy piece
of armor I wore for 15 years, a habit. *Adult*
female, a lady, though in this day and age
a lady can't be expected to curtsy. Kneeling
is more in fashion. *The female sex*, womanly
that's a promise behind pert lips, the smirk
of a capped bottle, not one who lays awake as the night
sweats by, legs sprawled unceremoniously open.
People expect something soft,
not the bones and teeth of the actual
not the scraped hair and fingernails of the actual
woman: a mode of address used chiefly derogatorily.

Arrested

Stopped, checked, stayed; seized
you and I, nothing more flimsy than lace
on a white negligee men like to stain.
Hold my hand as if we are
little girls awaiting daddy's verdict
to go to our room without desert.
The cop cops a feel, your breast lunging
towards him like a dangerous animal.
I never loved you before now.

Indecent

Our love,
tending to obscenity, never lets us kiss alone.
We met as exhibitionists, so if I spread my legs
it might make the evening news again. They were picketing
the local sex shop when I bought you this new purple strap-on,
holding signs with the bible misquoted,
in extremely bad taste.

Exposure

The action of leaving without shelter or defense.
The Hawthorne effect:
you pinch your cheeks and look industrious.
Buy me a magazine where I'm splayed
back inexplicably arched, open.
They've airbrushed my bush,
like a porn star or a 12 year old.

A voyeur makes the porn, turns the sound up
on your crying, an unwanted hand
in the wet on your thighs.
To in-authentically brighten the color
they overexposed it.

Wild

Uninhibited

We're trying to fuck ourselves

Free from restraint.

We are just another
freak accident.

Like an unplanned pregnancy that ends
with a belly of blood, a bottle full of coagulators.
There's such a *freedom* in bleeding,
hot and slick as sex.

Liberation from the bondage
or dominating influence of sin (a place
which I will gladly inhabit with you,
a city where we walk at night through smoke
with a snarl and torn denim coat) Gold
eyeshadow, smeared off your face,
thudding music like the gospel choir of sex.

A boy in the bathroom says he wants to die
Who would lose, though full of pain
this sexual being? You lean against me
such a suggestive act, hands under my skirt,
something like a prayer. Desperation
hides itself that way: good girl
bent over, hands on the wall.

Good girl, a small panting heart
that beats itself senseless
against the sad stone of your ribs.



recipe for frog juice

Lori Desrosiers

one frog, preferably angry
three ladles of white bean broth
two generous spoonfuls raw honey
fresh aloe plant, mashed,
four tablespoons maca root from Peru
pour bean broth, honey, aloe and maca
into a blender on a talavera tile counter
blend on high while counting to diecisiete.
pause.

kill frog by whacking on tiles
skin quickly with sharp pearl handled knife
drop frog in mixture,
blend on low while listening to jazz,
strain through white cheesecloth,
bury remains with minimum ceremony in shade,
drink before bed in steaming beer mug,
cures hysteria, malaise and sluggishness,
improves sex drive and libido.
caution:

do not imbibe more than twice a day,
may cause tantrums, stinging sarcasm
or four hour erections.



driving sonny corleone's big, black cadillac

Amy LaPrade

It was one a.m. when Lucy Mancini slid into the driver's seat of Sonny Corleone's big, black Cadillac. The abandoned lot was slick with rain and reflected the Manhattan skyline. A nebula of city light refracted on the hood of the freshly waxed car and in the puddles, which looked to her like shiny, liquid shards pooling at the foot of the boat ramp along the Hudson River.

In the rearview mirror and in the glow of the tail lights, Lucy could make out Sonny's heavy jaw and full, sensual lips. He was calling for her to back the car toward the ramp. She rolled in the direction of where he stood before halting in front of two signs: NO LOADING ZONE. NO TRESPASSING.

It's just like him not to obey signs. She threw the car in park, then glancing in the rearview, applied rouge to her mottled cheeks—hoping to appear more alert than she was when she and Sonny'd first rolled out of bed. Her eyes were puffy from having cried earlier, so she gave them a pat of concealer. She needed to look good in case they got arrested.

For what? She didn't know. But tonight could be her big break. Should the paparazzi arrive from out of nowhere while she and Sonny were being dragged from the police cruiser and into the precinct, she'd be sure to wiggle her way in front of him in order to take that great big camera flash right between the bosoms. She imagined the headlines saying, MAFIA GIRLFRIEND: THE GREAT SANTINO CORLEONE'S SIDE KICK, MAKES GOOD. On what? She wasn't sure but was grateful for being given the duty of driving the Cadillac—its seat adjusted close to the dashboard so that her dainty foot could reach the gas peddle.

Earlier, the two'd been cavorting. Sonny'd had her in the doggie-style position and in the middle of their moaning, followed by the neighbor banging on the other side of Lucy's thin wall, shouting, "Will you two lovebirds shut the hell up!" the phone rang.

Lucy'd begun to pout as Sonny slid on his trousers, his member still erect and smelling of her juices. 'An easy job...be back in an hour,' he'd whispered, one hand over the mouth piece while Lucy shot him a petulant stare, crossing her arms while a man's voice barked on the other end.

She couldn't make out the caller's words, and while she did feel highly annoyed, she also felt vaguely grateful that it wasn't Sandra, Sonny's wife, wondering where in God's good name he was at twelve a.m. and trying to cajole him back to the house with her freshly-baked, anise seed biscotti.

Silly, old cow. No wonder he cheats on her. A wife who spends her evenings baking biscotti can't possibly know the first thing about giving her husband a blow job...she needs a woman like me, so hubby'll remain the nice, non-violent type—who won't fly into a rage, like the way men do when they're feeling unsatisfied....

Lucy waited for Sonny's next command, Sex Panther—the spicy cologne he always wore and which permeated the car's leather interior—filling her nostrils. She tried to ignore it and Clemenza, Sonny's main man, who earlier'd been gawking at her bosoms but who now stood guard, at the front bumper, tossing her a sneer.

'No way,' Sonny'd told her, initially, when she'd asked to tag along. His response was always the same whenever she'd beg to be included. 'No way you're gonna get involved. No broad interferes with my business.'

'But I already have interfered,' she'd promised, this time aiming a pistol at his groin and pulling back the hammer—watching with satisfaction as the color drained from his Port wine complexion—before firing a blank. 'Told your sister, Connie, that if she breathed a word to Sandra about us, I'd come after her.'

Lucy touched her lip, gingerly. Clemenza was still sneering, so she looked away and watched Sonny watch her in the rearview. A belt in the mouth was the last thing she'd expected from him. Her lip had blown up like the campfire marshmallows she used to roast around her uncle's campfire when she was twelve—bulged the way roasted marshmallows do before they threaten to slide off the stick.

The blow had hurt and she'd cried—sobbed. Sonny was immediately sorry. She could tell by the way he'd gazed at his trembling hand in amazement, after having struck her. As bad as he was, he'd never hit a woman in his life—or so he told Lucy—not even when Sandra'd threatened to abort their son by sucking down six quarts of Rooibos tea if he didn't grow up and start behaving like a real husband—or the time Sandra, under the influence of Postpartum Depression, had called his mother a bitch. The woman wouldn't stop nagging her about the way she was pinning Sonny Junior's cloth diapers.

'Sorry, babe, but when it comes to family...no one messes with the Corleones.' Sonny'd pressed his silk handkerchief to her bleeding lip and, perhaps not wanting to lose a great piece of ass, acquiesced, 'Alright, you can come...but on one condition: keep her yap shut and speak only when spoken to.'

Lucy held her gaze in the rearview. She drummed her manicured nails—candy apple red—on the steering wheel. The sight of Sonny, jerking his thumb in a condescending manner as he signaled for her to crank the wheel, angered her.

He'll never dump that wife of his—not for any woman. Certainly not for me. They'd been at it for three months. Yet, aside from Connie and Carlo's wedding, not once had they seen one another during daylight hours.

He gestured for her to continue backing up. She did as he asked, a lump building in her throat as fresh tears slid down her cheeks. Believing that the shifter was in reverse, she stomped the gas. See you in Hell, shit head!