

MEAT FOR TEA

VOL 10 ISSUE 4
THE VALLEY REVIEW

SILVER NEEDLE



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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FRONT: "Velveteen Imperfect" by Braden Duncan

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Printing:

Paradise Copies, Northampton, MA

Typeface: Gill Sans, Libel Suit (Ray Larabie)

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Special thanks:

Mark Alan Miller and Justin Pizzoferrato and Sonelab, Abandoned Building Brewery, Broadside Books, White Square Fine Books, Big Red Frame, Platterpus Records, Topatoco, Joseph Boisvere, the Easthampton Cultural Council and ECA+, Pamela Means, Shokazoba, Solomon Scratch, Sean Wang, David Brame, Andre Rochester, Rob Kimmel, J. Andrew World, Paul W. Preson, Alle Kern and all of our sponsors.

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Vol. 10 Issue 4, December 2016, first printing. ISSN 2372-0999 (print) ISSN 2372-1200 (online)

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salutations from the staff

Welcome to our Silver Needle issue,

Far away in foggy Fujian the teas have long been left to dry, to cure, and packed up, shipped off, and deposited on foreign shores worldwide. Fleshy tea follicles flicker, floating under fluorescent lights in Florence. Some slowly slide and shimmer on the surface of some solitary saucer in Oslo. Hand-harvested and processed throughout the spring and summer, Silver Needle tea from April through August is available to sip, to slip behind Ceylon and Rooibos boxes and be forgotten; to be remembered and brewed several Decembers from now.

A special thanks to Pamela Means, Shokazoba, and Solomon Scratch for their performances at Le Cirque de Pain au Levain. Another sincere thanks for the lovely art from Sean Wang, David Brame, Andre Rochester, Rob Kimmel, and J. Andrew World, and to the readers and presenters at Le Cirque de Pain au Levain.

-Joseph

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compression

Nina Rossi

Seeking the cage in which my voice can singOUT
Maybe like some saltandpepper swishcan
Some doublewalled ketchup squishbottle
Some badmarraige squeezebed
Some nice man boringden
Some home alone badgirl dingup drug
Seeking structure to bring me wantout
Got the twig fence, break stick, scream heel dance
Got the howldrunk poem grunt tattoo whirl skirt
Gonna follow penny bright horn blasts going
Gonna be headbang and rustshins
Gonna turn the junklock and pick the breeze
Gonna hover with the antlers, the chandeliers,
Be all doublehung and tyvek
Be all hemtight and squeeze out
Be all corseted and Xeroxed,
Swaddled and ballpeened:
Gonna be that shapedform
That space between \ form
That language becoming
That art, *this*.



unrated

Mark DeCarteret

for some language
and disturbing images

though most of it mild—
timidly fashioned and dim-lit as
mine-shafts, old men's fantasies

the four or five suggestive
situations, nuanced states,

more a-storm, lukewarm-to-touch,
in a gangly, teenage-misfiring,
half gallop, half pole-launch sort of way

that I'd be lying if I likened to over-
killed anything, so many of its scenes

explicitly typecasting Texans, part-time staffers
either fasting or fattening up in the darkest of
thematic corners as if they were meth-samples

while the merely descriptive and dialed-up--
polliwogs partially trapped in their frog-selves,

place their products up onto the laps
of the second-rate industry pals and pray
that we're slapped well-past soulless rapture



rited

Mark DeCarteret

shingles shots
toilet paper
original pringles



on location

Mark DeCarteret

south of here
our hearts have gone through
thousands of takes--
shot after shot
of our enchantments
and outermost reaches
the unheard or thought-of

and north there
are either these actors
who mouth the scratched earth
or the re-actors
more concerned with the score
or those stars on the ceiling
they haven't a hand



soul-letting

Mark DeCarteret

burnt out on boy-tribes & runts
more of those most remote stories

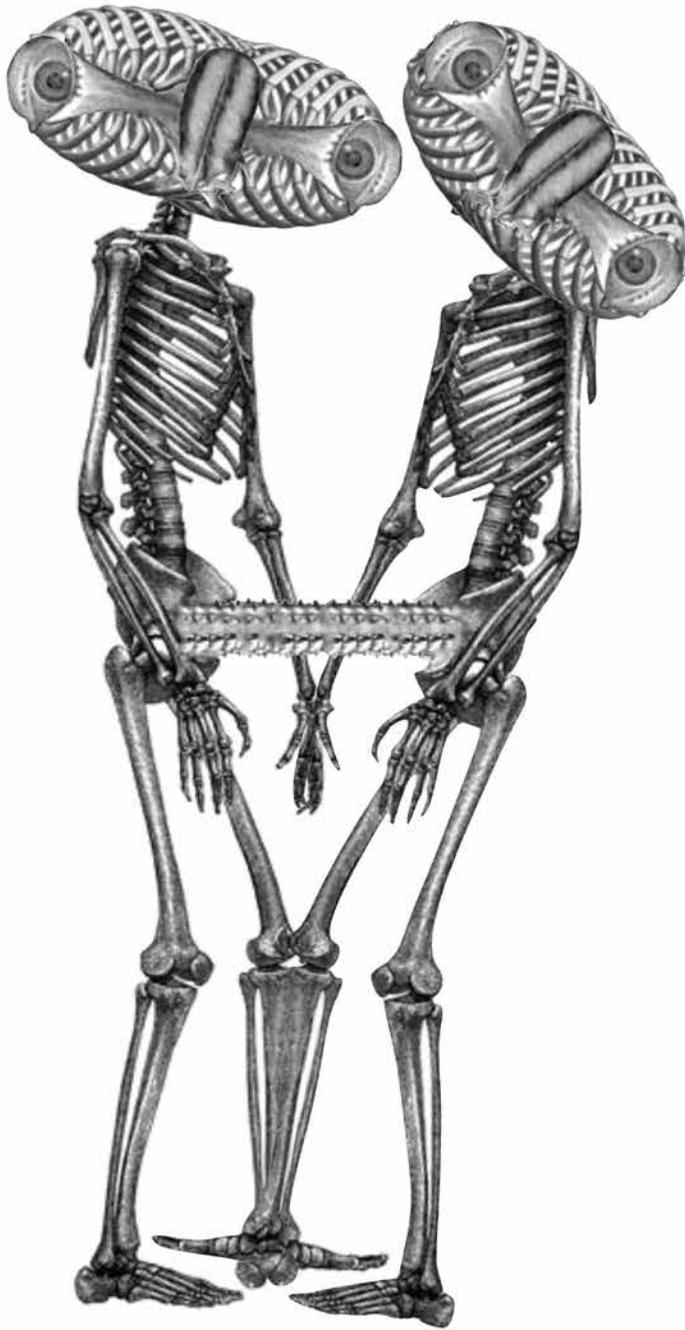
the best this the best that
lists of celebrity photoshop tips

(here I'll skip to some country minus
phoned-in e-pics & simulcast sunsets)

as well as creatures aping men
& men caped always packing

or orbiting yet another toy-sun
their rockets oft-gunned but untested, stunted





the unmistakable trance of tenderness
Bill Wolak

dad, trump and veteran's day

Dorri Olds

My father, David Mark Olds (born David Moses Goldstein), was an Army Captain in WWII. He grew up in the Lower East Side of Manhattan with so much anti-Semitism in the world that he changed his name.

Dad's barrel chest expanded when he told battle stories: "The smell of rotted flesh" and "seeing corpses stacked like cordwood," at Dachau. He stood taller when he said, "It was a just war. I was proud to fight."

I'd never seen my father cry until my older sister married a German. Like Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof, Dad tried to accept his daughter's choice to marry a non-Jew in the country he loathed. It pained him every time we visited her in the country he bravely defended against. Germans had murdered everyone in his family except his Russian parents who'd been sent to America, both at age 16.

This year, pre-election stress made me flee Manhattan for a week to be with my sister and nieces in their tiny rural town near Frankfurt. We spoke of ways the world had changed—a female running for president, a Jew as her Democratic runner-up.

We also spoke of America's version of Hitler: Trump, the man who memorized Hitler's speeches. Adolf shouted to crowds, "Make Germany great again!" while here in my homeland, Trump changed only one word.

My father was a registered Democrat. He said, "People fought for your right to vote." He taught me never to discriminate against any religion or skin color: "Most people secretly hold prejudices but you must always act with fairness." Honesty and honor were my father's signature attributes and he put family first.

It's a dangerous time now for everyone. Right-wing politicians in Europe are all cheering. The polls said Hillary Clinton had an 85% chance of winning. If I cried to my father, "How could this be happening?," Dad would've put his arms around me and said what he always did, "People lie in polls. They say what they think others want to hear. They tell the pollsters they read The New York Times, while they buy the New York Post."

For years, he lamented what happened to the pure jazz radio station he was president of. There weren't enough listeners to sell the advertising needed to keep it going. "People say they love pure jazz because they like to feel sophisticated. The truth is they only want commercial jazz."

Perhaps that is a partial explanation for how off the media outlets were about this presidential race. Of course Trump is not Hitler and now that the world has seen the devastation such a demagogue can inflict, my Dad would tell me that I mustn't fear the worst. "Worrying will wear you down to a frazzle," he'd say.

“Always take the high road,” Dad said. He taught me to stand strong in the face of adversity. So now, if I appeal to my best self, I can summon optimism that our president-elect will grow into the office and be a more honorable president than he ever seemed as a candidate or reality TV star.

We must believe that Trump will not be able to undo all of the good that people like my father fought for.



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fencing

Jan Maher

Joan gives me the look. She stirs her tea: red tea, because she's a fan of that Botswana detective, the fat fictional one who always drinks red bush tea. She stirs her tea, clanking the spoon, then lifting it from the cup and thrusting it at me, punctuating her stare.

"What?" I ask.

"You need to talk to him."

"Why? What will that accomplish?" We're talking about a guy, our neighbor over the back fence, who tosses wine bottles into our yard at the rate of four or five a week. She's been in a bind about how to respond. I have proposed getting a motion-activated flood light system installed so the next time a wine bottle flies over the fence it gets lit up like Kliegs are on it. "Like the president says," I say, "light is the best disinfectant."

"He said sunlight," Joan says. "Not any light. Not flood lights at night. Sunlight."

"The principle is the same. When you have something shady going on, you take a look at it in bright light."

"Natural bright light."

"Yeah, well, he's not tossing them in natural light, is he?"

"Why don't you just go talk to him? Tell him if he's the one throwing bottles into our yard, to please stop. And if it's not him, then..."

"If?" I counter.

"Well, it could be someone else."

"Like who?"

"Maybe someone comes in our yard at night to drink!"

"Not likely."

"But not impossible," she parries.

My wife should have been a trial lawyer. She likes to argue. Instead she's a therapist. I'm a CPA. I prefer to deal with numbers. Numbers don't lie. They either add up or they don't.

"Are you afraid to talk to him?"

"I just don't see what good it would do."

"I think you're afraid to talk." She sips her tea, then purses her lips and raises her eyebrows as if she's proved something. "I think you're afraid to confront him. Because it might not be him, and then you'd have to rethink your theory."

"Stop analyzing me. Why don't *you* talk to him? Since you have clearly thought out exactly what to say to have exactly the effect you would like to have."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Nothing. It doesn't mean anything."

That's the end of that conversation. Joan makes herself busy rinsing the wine bottles out to put them into recycling. She insists. I tell her it's ridiculous to rinse them. She reads to me from the instructions that come with our solid waste bill: "Clean glass bottles and jars, no caps or lids."

Our neighbor almost always leaves the caps on. Which tells you something about the kind of wine he drinks.

Anyway, I deliberately disengage and the whole conversation dissipates as it always does until two weeks later. It's recycling time, and we have another twelve bottles to make presentable for the recyclers.

"I think," she announces at breakfast, "something else could be at work here. It could be a passive-aggressive response to the blackberries along the back fence. Maybe the expression of someone who is afraid to say directly, 'Cut those damn blackberries.' I'd do it myself, but I threw my shoulder out."

"There will be no cutting blackberries until the fruit has ripened and we've made jam."

"We could make less jam," she says. "We never use up all the jam we make anyway. Or we could move them to another part of the yard."

"You don't move blackberries. They move you." A clever riposte if I do say so myself.

"Very funny."

"Seriously, if you want blackberries in some other part of the yard all I have to do is stop mowing it there for, oh, four or five hours."

She's giving me the look so I just restate my position. We are neither cutting nor moving blackberries. We will cut blackberries after we've made jam. It is not logical to waste resources.

The bottles keep coming. Thirteen during the two weeks the blackberries ripened. I rinse them out. She burned her finger making jam and doesn't want to get the bandage wet.