

# MEAT FOR TEA

VOL 12 ISSUE 1  
THE VALLEY REVIEW

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# 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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## 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, Big Red Frame, Topatoco, Sierra Grill & Building 8 Brewery, Corsella Butcheria, 61 Ramblers, Beach Honey, Leah Hughes, J. Andrew World, Michael Goldman and Hammer & Horn Productions, White Square Fine Books, Glamourama, and all of our sponsors. Our sponsors deserve great thanks - please visit them and let them you know you appreciate their support of the arts!

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Vol. 12 Issue 1, March 2018, first printing. ISSN 2372-0999 (print) ISSN 2372-1200 (online)

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## guest salutations

When I think about writing a dedication to Luc for this issue of *Meat for Tea*, I realize how Flemish that title really is. On the one hand, “Meat” in its barbarity, its fleshiness and connotations of the slaughterhouse, is appropriately pagan and Germanic, and on the other hand, “Tea” is more French, refined, intellectual. Meat and Tea were the two historical forces—from the East and from the West—acting on rural Flanders, where Luc grew up on a goat farm in the coastal town of Oostende. The sea was beautiful, and in church the sacraments formal and elegant, but on the farm there was chaos and cruelty to animals. It was not unusual for Luc at around age five to witness a sow being forcibly bred or slaughtered, or a new litter of kittens thrown into a sack and buried alive because it would have been too costly to feed those little mouths. In Luc’s early years you can trace the history of his intellectual passions as an adult, from Charles Darwin to Sarah Kane.

At Luc’s funeral, some of his colleagues remarked that they’d never understood how such a sensitive and tenderhearted man could pursue such shocking and savage subjects in his published work. I told them the story of how, when he was a boy, his farmer uncle tried to train him to slaughter and skin rabbits. Luc was the sort of boy who, if he wanted to pet a bunny, he would wait for the bunny to come to him rather than to advance on the creature and pet it willfully. If you look at photographs of Luc as a child, there is a tragic questioning in his eyes. I think he was trying to figure out where cruelty came from, and how it could be housed in the same human form as love.

If Luc were an architectural form, he would be a monastery, a haunted one, austere and inward. Drawn equally to the grotesque and to the sublime, he wanted to understand people’s monstrosity and their divinity. I am so honored to have been Luc’s wife for 13 years. He was a brilliant, serious, rare soul, both torn and refined.

-Sarah Gilleman



This issue is dedicated to the memory of Luc Gilleman.

# putting sally campbell down

Jane Yolen

She was the one we all envied,  
had the boys following her down the halls,  
like elk in rut, stropping their antlers  
against the high school lockers,  
jostling one another in the cafeteria  
just to sit at a table near hers.

I hated her all those years and after,  
hoping she'd had a hard life, mixed  
with alcohol, divorce, betrayals, fat.  
That first reunion, we all ten years older,  
our sour wishes still with us,  
puckering our mouths as if we'd put  
too many lemons in the punch bowl.  
It hurt to see her still bright, blonde,  
and the men still boys behind her.

But before our fiftieth, I sat in her living room,  
talked to her, about my dead husband,  
her old jobs, our histories, herstories,  
not so different after all.  
Something lighten inside me,  
my shoulders shrugged off a burden,  
I laughed at something she said,  
or something I said. At the next reunion  
we walked through the gloaming park,  
conversation a safety rope between us  
and I, grateful for the opportunity,  
put Sally Campbell down.



# the object of objects

Jane Yolen

*“To restore silence is the role of objects.”*

*—Samuel Becket from Molloy*

The teacup sits sulking with a cold brew,  
ignoring me as I'd ignored it for an hour.  
I suppose I could reheat it in the microwave,  
that final insult which will result in silence.  
Silence, of course, is the objective  
of all the objects in my house,  
to restore, keep, and enforce the quiet,  
especially after the holidays, a promise made  
once the grandchildren—that noisy presence—left.

I hold the cup, perfect except for the lack of warmth,  
and think about silence, about the cold,  
so unlike the lively house when it is full.  
If this is a metaphor about you in your grave,  
the eleven winters of my discontent, or loneliness,  
I apologize. Better to just heat up the damned cup,  
never the way to treat a good tea,  
or a good woman for that matter,  
and write another poem.



# lentil soup conversations

Jane Yolen

There's something about soup  
that comforts, then loosens the tongue  
till the words tumble between us,  
and we are instant old friends.  
The cheese helped, I suppose,  
and the apples, the sweet Fuji,  
the tarter Gala, like our conversation,  
ranging over family and the deaths  
of those we know. You reach a certain age  
and obituaries become your daily reading.

There's something about soup  
that comforts, then loosens the memory,  
till past and present blend together  
mixing like carrots and lentils,  
like cheese and carrots,  
like the crunch of baguette and crackers,  
the bones of our lives.



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# sherwood

Jim Infantino

*The phrase “no one could have seen it coming” is almost never true. For every unlikely event, there are dozens to thousands of people prescient enough to either prevent it or adapt to it. Martina Lamartine, born in New Orleans in the summer of 1974, was one such predictor. She moved from Louisiana to Greenwich, CT, in 2006, after her family home had been wiped out by a storm. She wanted to be as far away from levees and high water as she could while still being near the water. Greenwich and the Long Island Sound seemed safe to her at the time.*

- *The Wakeful Wanderer’s Guide, Ep. 6, line 100*

The Boston Post Road was empty of the usual foot traffic east of Sherwood as Marto arrived from the Cross County. The day’s ride had been lonely and uneventful. He encountered a few travelers and many autonomous caravans, slowly making their way along the major roads. The caravans crawled steadily along, according to their pre-programmed routes. Filling each to the very top were dozens to hundreds of tainers; smart boxes, negotiating their delivery from carrier to carrier.

Marto, like all of the moderately well Merited, traveled light. He wore his new shirt, a skull cap, and a woolen kilt. In his single pocket, he carried a few seed-bars for the first leg of his journey. He knew everything else he would need during his trip would be offered. The last time Marto had pedaled his way through here, there were pop-up shops up and down this stretch of the BPR. This time, they were sparse. The unicycle hummed beneath him, moving at a modest but easy clip. He was thirsty.

The BPR had remained the best kept up route along this part of the coast. Marto liked to think that this was thanks to the popularity his own posts during his first tour of the Northeast. The Merritt, heading off to the North, used to be the favorite way to go, due to its size and name, but in recent years the BPR had risen in popularity. Since The Tide, large lengths of old 95 had been washed out next to the eastern corridor tracks. Up ahead, even the BPR dove into the Sound, making Sherwood Hill a logical first stop on his tour.

He pedaled his neurally-connected unicycle over the rebuilt bridge spanning the Byram River. He was checking to see if he had any new followers, when a blur of brown and white shot out in front of his unicycle, pitching him forward and dumping him on the ground.

The chipmunk paused at the side of the road. It was chewing rapidly, front paws close to its mouth. Then it was gone into the weeds. Marto cursed as he stood, brushing himself off, and climbing back on the unicycle. Luckily the fall was more startling than painful. He checked again. His followership had increased slightly. They were replaying his fall in slow motion. Very funny. This was why Marto hated chipmunks.

Marto pedaled along another mile before heading onto a webbed carbon-fiber road going north. He couldn’t find any evidence of the local population. Queries ahead showed that

Sherwood was engaged in a Multi-User-Construct. Further inquiries came up blank, which was odd. It could have been something tactical, or a private game.

Then a gray-bearded man in a green flannel shirt, walking a big brown dog appeared, and Marto's uni went out from under him again. This time, he landed on his feet.

"Don't go up there, dude," the old timer said aloud. He was an older man, a Phobic, certainly. Marto couldn't ping him. "They don't wanna be disturbed."

"Interesting. Why not? What's going on there?"

"Sherwood tribe. They're locked in some kind of group activity thingy. I don't know enough about it and I wanna respect their privacy."

"Well, I'm on my way to see them and need a place to stop until they're ready. Do you have any water to share? I've been on the road all day," Marto asked, looking around the path for homes. None were intact. They were too far from the center of town.

"Yeah, I got water at my place. You're welcome to join me. I was just going home for supper."

["Who is this guy? Ask him where he's from,"] LalaUbriay thexted. Until now, Marto's followers had been quiet. Nothing eventful had happened on the road to this point, so they didn't thex their comments. Now they began to debate the situation in earnest. It was a good sign for the success of his trip. Intrigue can't be manufactured. When something unexpected happens, it tends to boost engagement.

"Thank you. I appreciate the invitation," Marto said walking with the man and the dog into the spindly woods. "What should I call you? I'm Marto."

"Gene Hernandez" the man replied over his shoulder. "I'm originally from a long way south of here. Used to be Kentucky, just outside of Louisville. Whole state went mad. I was lucky to get out of there with Nero here." He nodded to his dog.

["Be careful M,"] Dizzy chimed in. ["He might be a shooter. Definitely looks phobic."]

"I walked all the way up here through Ohio and Pennsylvania," continued Gene, "now I guess most of it is called The Jersey. Long, lonely walk. We stayed clear of other people until we got to a spot north of here. Found some of your Interconnected friends — what you call yourselves, right? They helped us out. I've been living here since the locals set me up."

Marto could see a couple of homes ahead. They were aiming for a red saltbox colonial fit with printed structures where storm damage had hit. It was on its own near the top of a hill, and looked inviting, if a bit desolate. Marto felt a nagging apprehension. He wished a tribal delegation had met him instead of this outsider.

"When I came through here last, I was met by a contingent of the local tribe. I don't understand why they're not here," Marto said, sounding a little nervous. Gene could tell.

"Listen, I don't want to creep you out. We're harmless, Nero and me. Honest. The tribe... they're just locked in a thing. I can't say I fully understand it. I don't have any goo in my head. They told me you'd be coming through today and I was supposed to meet you. They wanted you to wait until they're... finished?"

Marto could see a few chickens, a pair of goats and a horse near the old man's house. Then he noticed the children. They were playing around the back between the houses, becoming visible as he approached. They registered as Sherwood tribe and thexted him bright hellos with pictures and invitations to games. They didn't seem to be in any kind of distress. Several of Marto's followers connected with them and sent light happy messages and greetings. A few joined them in their games.

"As you can see," said Gene, "I'm sort of babysitting here today."

"What brought you to this area?" Marto asked, enjoying the back and forth between the children and his followers.

"Well, I would have headed south, but it's just dry and hot there. I've heard there were peaceful tribes around Texicohma and further west, but I was tired of all the hardscrabble feuding with the bikers and the Neo-Feudals. It's a young man's world and I really wanted peace and quiet. I heard it's peaceful here in the Northeast, so I thought I would go see for myself."

"You didn't want to settle in Quebec?" Marto wheeled his unicycle carefully over the uneven grass.

"No, that's not for me," Gene replied as if he had heard that question before. "Too many restrictions – I'm not crazy about the communist lifestyle."

"What about GreatLakes? Lots of peaceful tribes in GreatLakes. I gather you don't mind living on the outskirts of tribal life if they allow it."

"That was more or less a coin-flip." Queries came in regarding the meaning of the term. Marto let his other followers answer them. "I may not be connected to the network here, but I earn my way. The others keep score for me. They don't seem to mind. A few of them actually talk to me - I'm grateful."

["A Phobic with Merit? That's a new one!"] Trixie « Elizabeth « Catherine « Bonny « etc chimed in. ["I wonder if we should allow this in Barrington?"]

This was succeeded by a heated debate on the pluses and minuses of opening a tribe up to those who were not connected. Security issues, the integrity of the community; the back and forth was too quick for Marto to track while maintaining verbal communication with his host.

Gene's home was tidy and rustic. Inside were several infants dozing in cribs, seven printed and one handmade, likely by Gene himself. One was sucking on a bottle filled with what Marto assumed was goat's milk. These were tended by two of the older children.

“Do you like eggs? I have plenty,” said Gene. “I also have some fresh bread from a local baker named Yisa if you like. Real good bread. No bacon though, I really miss bacon.”

“Eggs and bread would be great,” said Marto, concealing his distaste at the idea of pig bellies burning on the stove. His followers launched into diatribes about the barbarity of eating dead animal flesh. “Do you implant your livestock?” he asked Gene.

“Not me, but the tribe insists. We get predators here and it’s safer. Plus the Interconnected people like to ‘inhabit’ them for fun.” He said this with a slight shudder.

“What about Nero?”

“Well, that’s where I drew the line,” said Gene firmly. “The dog’s mine and I don’t want any goo up in his head. Doesn’t seem right.” He chuckled a bit. “I mean he’s already smarter than I am. I don’t want him getting the upper hand, or else he’ll end up taking me for walks.... Come to think of it, maybe he already does.” Gene laughed. It was a deep soft series of exhalations. Marto decided he liked him.

[“He’s clearly pretty Phobic,”] thexted Jin « Sara « Lisa « Susan « etc [“the man is still living in the dark ages. An old world name and old world habits. How does Sherwood allow him to invade their space like this?”]

Gene poached the eggs, and served them atop toasted slices of yellow bread, with a dollop of habanero salsa. He made a pot of roasted dandelion tea and served it alongside. After a day’s travel with nothing to eat but seed-bars, Marto found these offerings delicious and he said so. They ate on the deck watching the children playing their invisible games. Gene prepared snacks for the children as well, and they would stop by and smile before digging in.

“So, what brings you here to Sherwood? You come far?” Gene was leaning back in his chair, preparing to light a pipe.

“Well, I ... Say, what are you smoking there?” asked Marto, indicating the wad of light green crammed into an old meerschaum. Unlike many of his stay-at-home friends back in Reverside, he had seen many people smoking before. Making a point of bringing it up was a just a tactic to whip up his audience, most of whom would find this exotic. He dimmed the inevitable storm of thexts expressing alarm and disgust, so he could enjoy the moment with Gene.

“Oh, sorry, my home, you know. It’s a mix of marshmallow and marijuana. Packs a bit of a punch. Calms me down. Want some?”

“Cannabis. I’m familiar. No thanks. You grow it here?”

“The tribe does. You have to keep the females separated from all the other hemp plants, and those are everywhere you know. They have a series of glassed-in gardens. Grow it for medicinal use. They give it to me as part of the deal I have here.”

“I would really love to hear more about your deal. It sounds interesting. To answer your question, I have just come east from Reverside by the Tappan Zee Bridge, down the remains of the Cross County and up the Post Road where you met me. I’m a travel writer of sorts. This is the first day of my new writing tour.”

“Wow,” said Gene, exhaling into the evening sky. “An actual journalist. I love it.”

“I think of myself as more of a traveling historian, but I’ll take journalist. I like to tie the present to the past.”

“Hmm, mostly I just try to forget the past and stay in the present. But I’m intrigued. Do you have anything I can read?”

“Well, not with me, but if you have any printer bots and paper, I can export what I have so far. The thing is a work in progress.”

“Oh, I don’t keep too many bugs around. But I would really enjoy reading a copy of what you got. Maybe when the tribe wakes. Shouldn’t be too much longer.”

Gene Hernandez reclined in his hand-made rocker and puffed away, blissful. Marto decided to write a bit in the quiet of the early evening.

*Martina ran a successful catering consulting business in Greenwich, CT, for two decades before she saw signs the rising tides were coming again, this time to affect everyone. She was distraught and alone in her perception, as real estate prices skyrocketed and the wealthiest continued to build sea-side palaces. She thought about moving inland, even though her home was above the eventual flood rise for the coming decades. She poured over topographical maps and knew the ensuing chaos would reach her home on Sherwood Lane before the water ever would. Facing a choice between moving her business and family to a new location, or digging in where she was, she chose the latter. Her children thought she was crazy.*

*She expanded her basement and stockpiled cans of food, water, guns, and supplies. Her husband humored her. They could afford it, and he knew he couldn’t dissuade her from this new hobby, knowing her history. Before long, they lived atop a stocked bunker. Complaints from the neighbors poured in and neighborhood committees threatened to remove her. The lawn turned brown, the pool stayed dry, and the paint peeled off their cheerful Dutch Colonial home.*

*Though Martina was prescient, she failed to anticipate important details as events began to unfold. Disease [link to virus migration], The Vengeance [reference to bands of assassins who hunted down and killed the rich], and a decline in birth rate [link to information on Siberian Zika] quelled the general wave of violence she had so carefully prepared for. The onslaught which thinned out her part of the world was largely microscopic, and Martina underestimated her own response to these catastrophes. When times got tough, she found she was more inclined to help than hide, and those who witnessed her kindness remembered it in kind.*

-The Wakeful Wanderer’s Guide, Ep. 6, lines 101 to 103