MEAT FOR TEA

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THE VALLEY REVIEW

LOTUS BLOSSOM

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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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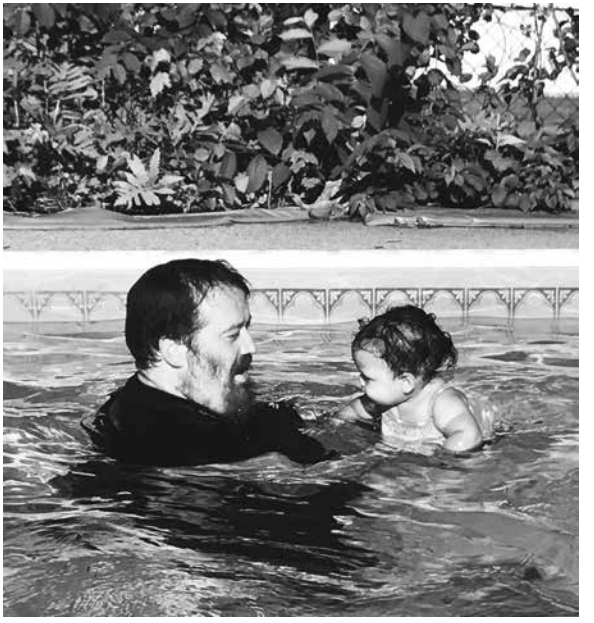
guest salutations

Dear readers,
We at Meat for Tea were very sad to learn of the recent passing of Joe Magrone, an inimitable feature of the local music scene, immortalized in his stickers, which festoon one of our bookcases and can be found all over downtown Northampton and beyond. We are pleased to introduce our guest salutation writer, sharing her heartfelt memories of the wonderful human.

-Elizabeth MacDuffie and Mark Alan Miller

Joe was the sweetest curmudgeon I've ever known. Once you got past the salty exterior you would find someone always willing to help you out, even if it came with a side of wise ass. We spent a lot of time swimming and grilling in the summers; one of my favorite memories was a time we decided to watch movies in the pool. Joe brought the tv outside and we set up in our floats to watch Antman, but the temperature just wasn't with us. It kept getting colder and colder till we were both shivering, but we had committed ourselves to watching the movie in the pool so that's what we did, shivering be damned. It's these small moments of quiet comaraderie that built our friendship, and these quiet moments I'll miss even more than his hugs.

-Oceana Shawanda

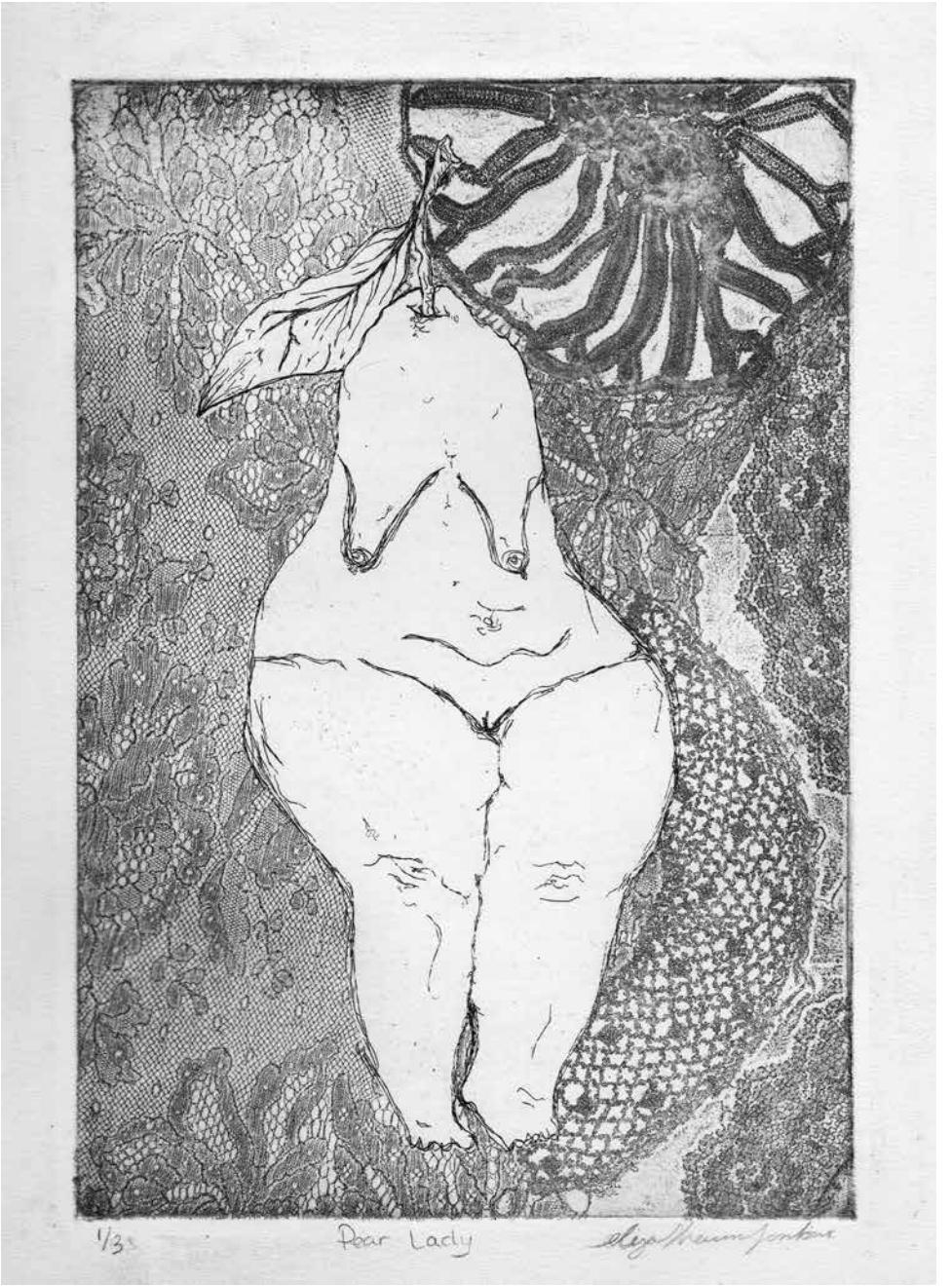


my checklist

Eliza Strauss Jenkins

Things that make me feel beautiful,
an inspiration checklist:

- Making and drinking coffee
- Looking organized
- An unruly amount of jewelry
- Laughing with friends
- Making friends laugh
- Radiating laughter, alone
- The Dr martens
- Making art
- Cooking and making a mess
- Lip stain
- Dancing alone
- Fun hair scrunchies
- Biting my lip during an orgasm
- Long hot showers spent harmonizing to the perfect song
- Sleeping naked
- Sleeping in and waking up with the sun shining on my skin
- The flower dress
- Taking absurd amounts of time to get ready in the morning
- Running fashionably late and arriving **ready**
- Standing tall
- Wild eyeliner
- No makeup-good skin days
- Eating fruit as a pastime
- Reading in public
- Working in public
- Being a valuable worker
- Getting dressed up for museums
- Wearing capes
- Wearing jackets
- Naturally mid-parted hair
- Burgundy-red acrylic nails
- Flirting to a tee
- Brave
- Lying on fresh grass in summer time
- Drinking wine with a delicious meal
- Eating extravagant food
- Eating chocolate desserts
- Making a scrumptious breakfast *avec classe*
- Talking about things I know
- Walking barefoot in the sun
- Walking quickly through the streets of Paris
- Knowing where I'm going in airports
- Having good conversation with my family
- Ordering well
- Using a diva cup
- Painting my toenails
- Being a good traveler
- Choosing good music on long car ride
- Playing mood-matching music
- Spontaneity in the mind of a Capricorn
- Surprising people, with my beauty
- Being home for Spring
- **Hot**-lazy-morning clothes
- Matching bra and underwear
- Turtlenecks
- Making good small-talk at checkout
- Speaking ‘not-English’
- Wearing my glasses on a good face day
- Wearing contacts on a good hair day
- Looking beautiful before going to bed, with no one else there to admire me, but me
- Good sunlight
- Stretch marks
- My curves in the sun



pear lady
Eliza Strauss Jenkins

it's cliché, i know

Eliza Strauss Jenkins

*** It's cliché, I know

keep that devil suit on. Dirty children will try to rip it apart; you will think it's because it's shameful. But my child, they steal your sequins, hoping it will bring them the dazzle they see you reveling in.
When heat is placed next to cold, the cold absorb the energy until the two reach equilibrium.
But they can never be equal to you. They will tell you you are dumb, you cannot learn. You should drop out; give up! They are lying. Thieves lie. They simply hope that when you (you bright star) explode, they can have some of your dust; they will fight for it.
Don't let them. Don't explode, don't give them what is yours.

*** It's cliché, I know

keep wearing those oversized sneakers, they too fill the empty spaces with gold. When pants are too tight, and children laugh at you, know they are so cold. And about those pants, stop trying to make yourself smaller. Let yourself be a spacious pillar. Let yourself be.

One day a surgeon will cut you open to heal you. He's helping. Let him.

*** It's cliché, I know

keep that white dress on, with snot covered sleeves, those belong to you.
There is so much in you. Your energy slips through the cracks of your skin, your eyes cry gold--it spills. Don't let it spill. Don't let them cut you open and steal your gold. You will get angry: angry god gave you these golden things that fill you so heavy. Gave you a burden, gave you value. You are tired of holding the weight, tired of fighting off the foul hands of children. You will blame yourself for the pain they cause you. The blame is not yours to hold, you have enough already.
Someday, you will stop spilling. You will cry gold, but drink your tears. dear child, taste the salt they've banished.
You will grow muscles that can withstand and. You will be imperforable. You will be scarred--sewn shut.

Pain might still creep. A bite will itch at you, and then more bites, itchy--etching you raw. You feel a need to let some weight off your shoulders, you won't want to be strong anymore. You will start doing your own cutting. Spilling gold on the trails as you wander alone. You will think this is how you leave a trace. This is how they will find you, and beg to heal you. But you do not need others to heal.
~~Pick up your lost pennies. They will be worth something someday.
Don't take anything off for them. Don't let them take anymore
You will live in that head of yours longer than you ever thought you could.
It will feel like brewing, like a fever about to break, water about to boil. Stop watching the kettle.
You will boil. You will break though. And when you do: don't take anything off. Don't let them take, anymore.
Boil over, boil in, boil out,
just stop trying to boil away.

practicing fearless

Jane Yolen

"Some people shut down when confronted with
mystery and uncertainty. Others open their hearts
and become fearless."—Doug Anderson New Year's wish FB

My DNA did not come with the gene.
It was the forties after all.
Like other girls, I hid my brains
behind long bangs,
an Ozian curtain.

Somewhere around fourth grade
I began practicing fearless:
dancing en pointe, riding Lippizanners,
reading books of fantasy and history,
speaking in my own voice.

Bugs did not make me scream, nor mice,
though I never overcame the fear
of snakes, the slither of them,
the rasp through leaves,
that coil.

Some day, my fearless will be full,
I will wind my way across the grass,
a wave of ambition, linking
Eve to ever, and fear to fair,
opening other girls' eyes

Till they are blinkless, like the moon.

collaging life

Jane Yolen

That bit of paper there,
that inch of red string,
that old cork from a bottle
a friend drank from last night.
That tag of story,
a variant of Donkeyskin,
worn out sock as soft
as an infant's cheek.
That photograph of you,
field glasses in hand,
on some unremembered beach.
That four notes of music
insistent, fierce,
that turn of ankle
beneath the long tutu.
That sound of a new carrot
crunched between my teeth.
The taste of your tongue,
the limp curl of your hair
after a shower.
The smell of porridge
sharp in the morning's cool.
And the birds outside my window
insisting on being a reminder
that the sun still manages
day after lonely day.

there is no clutter, with apologies to emily dickinson

Jane Yolen

There is no clutter I can't climb,
a mountain on my desk,
an Everest of paper stuff,
the mind at daily risk.

A slippery and sliding slope,
A mass of good intentions,
My climbing rope and pitons near
Prepared for my ascensions.

And if some day they find me here,
at peace upon the rug,
they'll know that clutter did me in,
and leave me with a shrug.

trapped in amber

Jane Yolen

This tick, still fully engorged
with blood from its final meal,
has rested in an amber cocoon
for ninety-nine million years.

It is touched by a feather,
tangled in resin, an old story
preserved: Dinosaur. Flight.
Parasite. Greed.

Eons later, we wrestle
with much the same,
though now we call it politics.
Those who inherit our ruins

will read the bloody runes.

roe deer, sweden

Sue Brearey

vertical farm

Gerald Yelle

I worked on the 35th floor –blackberry pancake trees with strawberry pop tart bushes. Sometimes everything went the way we wanted. Other times we had to wait for the sun to come out. It wasn't because the grow lights didn't work. It was because the sneeze machine was stuck. Once in a while we had to give it a kick. Then we had to close the blinds and leave.

So the fans suddenly stopped working and it got hot as the dickens. Marvin opened the windows but that just let in bugs and pollution. Nobody cared. Nobody was scared. The celery we were growing was bug resistant. Genetically altered. Nobody liked eating it but there wasn't much else. Then the lights went out and we had to walk around with flashlights. Shadows bouncing off all the mirrors made the place extra eerie. Like a funhouse. Everybody grunted at once to let off steam.

There isn't any snow in my hometown, but there is in yours. I think snow is symbolic of the kind of towns we live in. I think ordinary towns are allegorical. I think they speak a strange dialect there. Their diction is very elemental.

Peace in the kingdom: the freezer running just fine. Artificial Quagmire in charge of making the meat grow. You never know what it's going to do next. You sometimes get the picture. You sometimes snooze and lose.

dust

Gerald Yelle

We have a high tolerance for dust. We let it accumulate on the furniture and under the beds in a way that would have disgusted our grandparents –who themselves were not always the cleanest. Our parents: forget about it, they always insisted we keep a clean house. They tried to shame us into it. Then they got old and stopped coming over. We have to visit them. They barely have the strength to clean themselves but still their shelves are cleaner than ours. The shame is beginning to hit home. We used to believe it when we told them we had better things to do than clear the dust off our possessions. We weren't all that concerned with possessions anyway, though we can't bear to part with them. We hired a housekeeper for an hour a week, which meant our toilets were clean and floors swept, but the dust continued to thicken. Our children developed asthma. That shamed us into taking a shot at cleaning up ourselves. We blew dust off the tops of books and knickknacks so that the air became unbreathable even for those of us who were not asthmatic. It settled back to where it was, maybe a little less heavily. A vacuum cleaner salesman told us there were mites living in dust that could cause serious infections. We bought the vacuum and asked our housekeeper to use it once a month under our beds instead of cleaning the kitchen floor. She said it was too heavy to carry up and down the stairs, so we thought we'd do it ourselves when we have the chance. By then the children will have grown up and moved off so it won't matter as much. Maybe we'll dust when we retire.

it was our blue-green vacation

Gerald Yelle

Going to the ocean. First we had to watch Sid Green on the food channel prepare blue-green black-eyed peas. We bought baggies of them. Most were teal with the eyes a slightly darker shade. Some were bright solid blue –owing to the introduction of color changing bacteria. A virus had stunted the growth of some crop yields, but the ones we had were freakishly large – some kind of genetic mutation. We took them to the ocean. You'd think it was sad that we didn't go in the water –but we did spend time looking at it –yet another blue-green beauty. We were having too much fun in the summer house. Imagine how shocked we were when it snowed. It was less than an inch but all we had for footwear were sneakers and flip-flops so we had to be careful how we stepped on the sidewalk. Well, it wasn't that bad, it wasn't slippery anyway. I just hadn't wanted to get my feet wet. I thought it was brave of my nephew to dive into the pool with all his clothes on –he went all the way to the bottom, then he just stayed there motionless until his dad jumped in after him and pulled him up. He seemed okay. He wasn't crying or anything. I didn't feel bad about not jumping in myself –having always been standoffish and problematic around leadership roles. But I was feeling growing pains in this area. One couldn't say, "This is how I am" forever without coming across as stunted and lame.

I imagined the kind of change the neural equivalent of a chromophoric bacteria might provide. Short of that I could start drinking. With no family history of alcoholism I think I'd be a better leader if I got loaded once in a while. I could go on tour with the Ice Capades. Engage in some escapades of my own. I wouldn't care, as long as I got time off for next year's vacation.