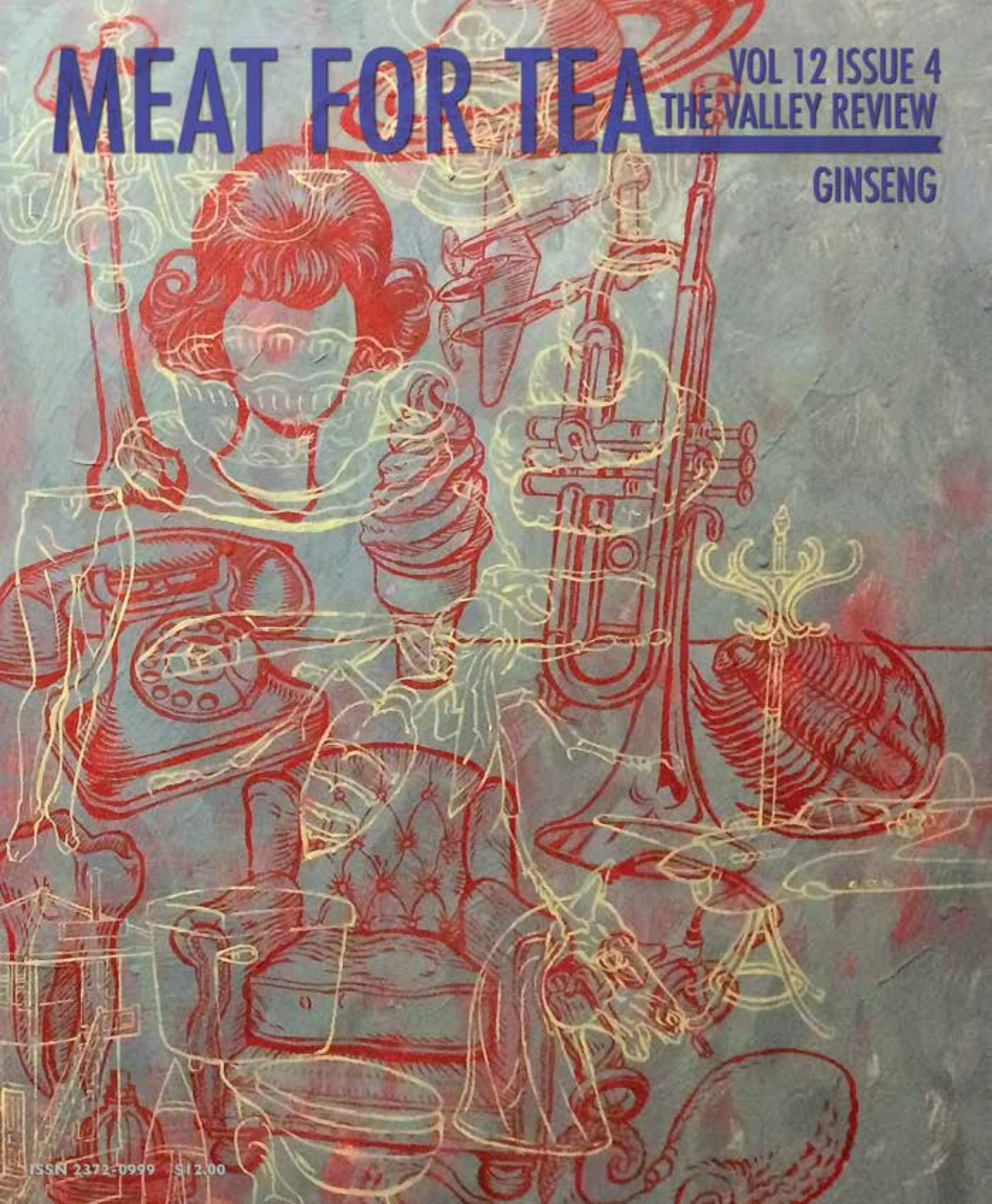
MEAT FOR TEA

VOL 12 ISSUE 4
THE VALLEY REVIEW

GINSENG



ISSN 2372-0999 $12.00

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.

Staff:
Editor-in-Chief: Elizabeth MacDuffie
Layout: Mark Alan Miller
Intern: Cori Cannavino
Impresario: Elizabeth MacDuffie

Cover Art:
"Ready to Go" by Erik Patterson

Printing:
Paradise Copies, Northampton, MA
Typeface: Gill Sans, Libel Suit (Ray Larabie)

Contributors:
Izabela Babinska, Stephanie Baird, Christopher Beckett, Seth Cable, Jacob Chapman, Amarjit Chopra, William C. Crawford, Pernille AEgidius Dake, RC deWinter, Charles Duffie, Cynthia Gallaher, Paul Acevedo Gomez, Richard Wayne Horton, Rollin Jewett, Jury S. Judge, Linda Kraus, Amy Laprade, Dean Liao, Stefan Lovasik, Beth Savage Marchese, Michael Mau, Caleb Murray, Jose Oseguera, Constance Owens, Erik Patterson, Jonathan Andrew Pérez, Esq., Jim Ross, Gerard Sarnat, Joanelle Serra, Michael Washburn, Chante Wolf, Gerald Yelle, Jane Yolen

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, First Children, John Trudeau, 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!

To submit to Meat For Tea, please go to: meatforteathevalleyreview.submittable.com/submit.
Please send all other editorial correspondences to meatfortea@gmail.com.

Vol. 12 Issue 4, December 2018, first printing. ISSN 2372-0999 (print) ISSN 2372-1200 (online)

For more information or to purchase current and back issues, PDFs and subscriptions, please visit www.meatfortea.com.

salutations from the editor

It is often said the most boring thing one can do is to recount one's dreams, so forgive me, dear reader, if I'm being a bore. I've had a couple of nightmares recently, which I'll tell to you with the utmost brevity.

Nightmare 1:
Our car had broken down and we had to thumb a ride. No sooner had my husband put out his thumb, than a car screeched to a halt and invited us in. I suddenly realized the people in this car were Trumpers and had been eager to gather us up. We were brought to an old farmstead and separated. The women, all clad in long gowns in shades of grey and black said I was to be "deprogrammed." I mentioned this reminded me of The Handmaid's Tale, and one of them told me, "You libtards need to get some new ideas. That's an old book!" Fadeout, nightmare 1.

Nightmare 2:
We were planning a themed celebration in a large auditorium and I was on the planning committee. The theme was supposed to be one of equality and harmony for all, regardless of race, class, religion, sex, or gender. An administrator strode into the room and announced that we needed to change the theme because The Vests didn't approve. We were ordered to change it to "America First." Fadeout, nightmare 2.

In waking life the nightmares continue, as I bear witness to the tear gassing of children, a fire destroying Paradise, and the bleeding trees that currently decorate the White House, and in these dire times I am more grateful than ever before that I have a rabbithole of literature and art into which I can temporarily descend. I take respite in the process of reviewing submissions and I hope, dear reader, that you will also be able to find some respite in the pages of the "Ginseng" issue. Respite that reenergizes you with the drive to keep fighting, as you can trust I shall.

The Cirque will be a welcome panoply of the art of Erik Patterson, short films, spoken word, and the music of John Trudeau and First Children, recorded live on the premises. I'll see you there, yes?

Besos y Abrazos,
Elizabeth

the emiliy dickinson suite

Jane Yolen

1.

Emily Dickinson's House

It surrounds her mystery.
Doors open, close. History
deceives her, receives her.
She is violated by our curious gaze.

Once corporeal, she walked,
talked to her sister,
wrote her letters wildly and widely,
though the world did not respond.

Once she dropped baked goods
over the sill into childish hands.
Mouths full, they shouted thanks.
Once she walked her ally dog.

She listened to the buzz of flies,
playing on the black and white keys
of her heart. No one else
in the big house heard them.

She made the world up word by word,
poetry in the half-light.
We make her up as we go long;
a certain slant of mystery.

2.

On Writing In Emily's Room

Is there something in the walls,
A memory in the horsehair chair,
The light slanting through the window
On this early June afternoon?

Can I feel a breath stirring
that is not mine,
a pattern beyond wallpaper;
the imprint of that mind?

Is that the flash of a swallow
who's great, great many times great
grandparents made the same flight
between Homestead and road?

The tall sentinel of trees,
were they new planted
when Emily sat, dreaming
the monopoly of her poems?

Or am I just touched by chance,
and a writer's hope
for inspiration, and the walls
like Emily, are many iterations

Away from being alive, real,
muse-like, and ready to assist
when words do not come,
when words do not come,

when words do not come with ease.

3.

Two Hours in Emily's Room

This room is slanted towards poetry,
canted towards metaphor,
On rainy New England days
it drips rhyme.

Yet I am an awkward fisherman
trying to catch slippery words,
my net's mesh too large.
Emily's was fine.

If she is the muse of this museum.
she's on a trip, perhaps in Boston,
perhaps
poling down the swollen Connecticut
in a boat of prose.
I must seek my own muse,
now sulking in the parlor.
In a few minutes, I will collect her.
We will head home.

Perhaps the fish dinner will still be
warm
with a desert of fine words,
cream topping of rhyme,
and a small glass of old whine.

4.

Certain Light

She was right you know,
about that certain slant.
The light looks different
that side of the Atlantic,
the clouds further up,
anchored in the blue, the grey.
Even friends from the Midwest
comment on how large the sky seems
in the Highlands, over the Fife fields.
Three or four distinct cloud layers
busy as gulls on the coast.
Back in the coze of New England,
I am in a duvet landscape,
wrapped and somewhat trapped
by borders and the orderliness
of the towns.
The light cants down on us
as permanent as a street lamp,
and as insistent.

5.

OK Cupid, I Am #EmilyDofAmherst

https://electricliterature.com/i-pretended-to-be-emily-dickinson-on-an-online-dating-site-f82c95357a46

I am a Poet,
Rather plain,
Hair a burr
And not a mane.

I garden and
I sometimes bake.
I am not looking
For a Rake.

I dream of love,
But write of Death,
The two are one
Just paused by breath.

You might well come
And visit me.
This side for an
Eternity.

no, you didn't miss my reading

Jennifer Juneau

No, baby, you didn't miss it. It's still on the 13th

I was at another poet's reading

You see, I called because I thought you'd pop in

So I can see your lovely face

Squeeze your hand under the table

Corner you for a kiss when no one was looking

Pretend we didn't know each other, what a thrill

Slip back to your place

Have you in a moonlit room

Shiver while you turn me into honey

Tie your heart strings into double knots

Stumble out of your bed at the crack of dawn

Take forever to leave because, although I have to leave

I don't want to leave you

Fumble with your door locks (they've never been easy)

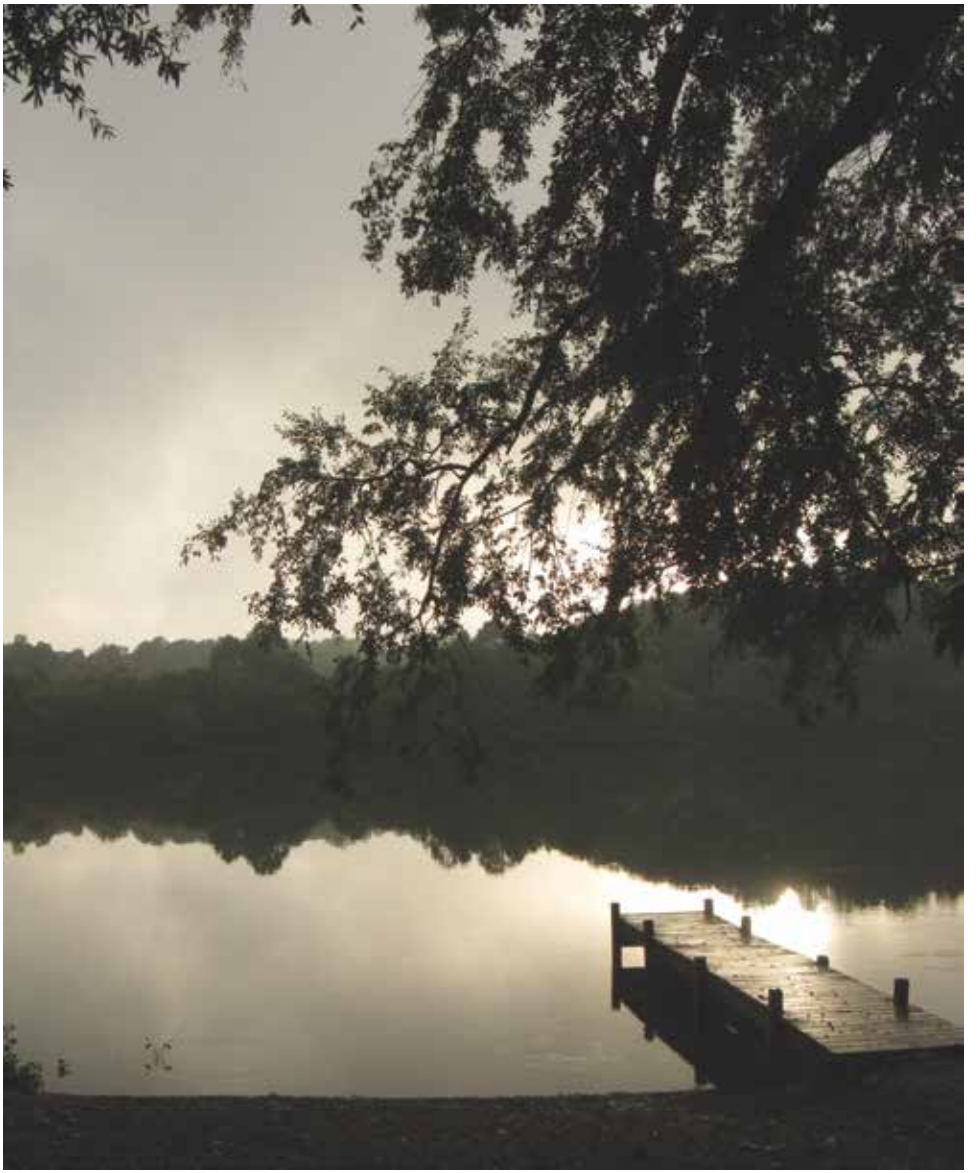
(Or maybe I was willing them to keep me locked in)

Stop for a coffee around the corner from the subway

Write all day on zero sleep and love it

So no, baby, you didn't miss my reading

I just missed you



evening solace
Rollin Jewett

playback

Pernille AEgidius Dake

I love jazz, sometimes. Not that I fall in and out of love like someone lovesick, yet not love-struck, but every so often I'll catch passions and aches that linger longer, or movements that flit about more mysteriously than in other genres. It used to be I'd only notice jazz as, say, snippets spilling from the open window of a car passing me on the street. Or, as background music, offset by conversation at someone's house. Disco was more my thing.

Then I married Chaz, twenty-seven years ago. His close friends were all about jazz. I remember how the first couple of concerts I attended stretched like elastic bands getting pulled more, and harder, and longer into variations on bafflement. Instead of snapping, I gave in to the tension. A sort of forced relenting, which is how I believe Chaz learned too. Still, the tangles and hurly-burly bebop grew on me. With Chaz, I tapped into new complexities and intensities, to spasms of emotions. When listening to jazz, I'd start to feel tuned in, as though picking up previously unidentified frequencies. Like hearing sonar hitting targets and knowing the objects would never be apparent, except as staccato blips on a screen; distinct yet intangible.

Chaz never let on how he really felt about the music. But it meant a lot to both of us to be included in the Jazz Gang. These friends accepted us fully, also for our fumbling listening abilities. Especially Chaz needed space to take in the music at his own pace. He was like the soft breath in a brass instrument that formed the solemn notes; a calm standstill, patched with occasional hiccups of upset and hoots of happiness. _

With an age difference of seventeen years, we didn't always approach convention the same way. The Atlantic Ocean divided our upbringings. My Danish sense of principles didn't always clear with Chaz' American frontier spirit and 'that's good for now' philosophy. I didn't easily reconcile with his many, past love affairs that he thought was okay to let peter out, instead of officially end, because he'd initially told each woman, "I won't settle down." Yet he did, with me.

In front of the mayor, we'd vowed each other devotion and respect 'for richer, for poorer'—and 'all that jazz.' Chaz liked to drive and keep driving; while I insisted on pee and pit stops, and museum visits. He was mysterious; I wanted to talk, constantly. He picked up and caressed stunned birds that hit our windows; I killed the kit bunny, after Chaz had fed it carrot muffins, for days, and its underdeveloped intestines clearly couldn't bear any more. He began construction projects; I wanted to finish them. We balanced the differences. Our life together wasn't as unpredictable as jazz, but we extemporized our way through the days and made them less ordinary.

Every summer we attended the annual Newport Jazz Festival (now Freihofer's Jazz Festival), held in Saratoga Springs, Chaz' hometown. Hanging with the Jazz Gang, the event was, to us, equal to celebrating Christmas. Including the childlike anticipations.

During sets, paying attention to the horns of a composition, I'd get the sense of trying to catch someone else's breath, while holding my own. I'd become so affected I had to let the stirring out—like steam just before a kettle whistles—and I'd applaud, even in the middle of concentrated solos. That show of appreciation, however, embarrassed Chaz, particularly if I'd

started the clapping. If someone in the audience then looked our way, he couldn't recognize the acknowledgement, only see I interrupted, and he stiffened up and became extra quiet.

But Jazz let me drift. Like straying into an unknown city and getting lost, winding around on compelling and curiously laid out streets. If recognizable passages intercepted, they soon spun off again. Or the squealed pull of a trumpeter's incessant—insistent—one tone turned into a drawn-out shrillness that could feel endless, inconceivable, and visible, all at once. Thrust from the pit of a player's lungs, air molecules seemed strung out and up and along, as if into a vacuum. I'd zone out, zip back in. I zigged and I zagged. I learned to trust the musicians to tie and thread me through any possible, and impossible material; in the end, everything would smoothen back out. As was it with Chaz and me.

Twenty-one years ago, the festival had an extraordinarily good lineup—Chuck Berry, Herbie Hancock, Tito Puento, Chick Corea, among others. It prompted someone in the Jazz Gang to record a video. Watching the VHS, three years later, at that year's pre-festival party, is an event that remains with me, like a needle forever stuck in a scratched vinyl record:

Judy, my friend and hostess of the pre-festival gathering, calls to tell me we're going to watch the recording. "We have to check out the video, while someone still has a VCR," she chuckles. Then she reminds me there'll be images of Chaz. They'll be from his last festival.

Six months after that jazz festival, he'd left our new home in Charleston, SC to go to the quarry early one morning, kissing me and whispering, "I'll be back in four days. But I'll call tonight." He never did. By nightfall he was gone. The work he couldn't wait to get going on turned into a disaster. He was killed with the swipe of an excavator.

From the onset, the Friday night party is upbeat, as always. Shuffled mixes by top-notch musicians stream from speakers placed on the lawn; the aroma of grilled chicken nearing done wafts over the chatting crowd and up onto the porch; conversations leap around; everybody is fine, or not. Health has hit the rollercoaster state for some. It's no joke to be at an age where your back goes out more than you do.

The video is put on. Anticipation swells as if in a movie theater. I find a seat in front, on the floor, in the archway of Judy and her husband Don's adjacent living rooms. Leaning against the doorway and sipping my beer, I have a clear view into the room with the Steinway, where their TV and VCR also sit.

The movie starts. I'm prepared like I am when opening a photo album, bracing for painful, but known nostalgia. I seek out the smaller, blonder version of Tom Selleck; Chaz' striking looks that not everyone had the ability to see past. Most who met him didn't get close enough to understand his quiet and dignity.

This time, however, Chaz won't just be a still picture. Nor will the images be my oft-perused photos from three or more years ago, when he was still alive. When we documented the restoration of our farm in California; family visits; the trips overseas; exploring the US, including small towns because they were named Denmark; the jazz festivals; or the new business in South Carolina, brokering granite, which we knew little about.

It's not that I live in the past; I just don't know how to live in a present that remains his. I left my home country and crossed the Atlantic to marry him. My days were filled with his silly "Honey, I'm home"; his gentle smile resting on me at the, I thought then, oddest times; his quiet that absorbed my griping over employees at the retail tax office; his halting pat on the back that said, 'I got you,' and he did. Chaz held the space wherein I moved.

When I called his mom with the dreadful news, Philly, in her shock and grief, said I had to take his place. I stayed in our house I never took to. I restructured and put all possible effort into our granite business. I remain surrounded by his Jazz Gang, which he belonged to, for years, prior to our marriage. Improvising my way through each jumbled day, I'm a single, offbeat and raw tweet on an otherwise empty sheet of music.

Three years after his death, I still feel like sonar echoing in a dead sea. Whatever distress signals I send out, Chaz no longer picks up. The grief slinks back into me, in Don and Judy's dim living room, where a shaky myriad of faces and commentary from the guy holding the camera—it sounds like Carl—fills the television:

Sandwiches were being assembled on Judy's kitchen counter. Carl asked if there were enough. Judy said, "yes." Bridgette said, "no." The same question applied outside, where seven coolers could well swallow more than the stockpile of canned beers, rebottled booze and the slew of ice bags strewn on the lawn. "Okay, let's get going," Ralph hurried.

The habitual, organized chaos.

The camera cut to outlines of treetops against a blue sky, then panned to capture our slot on the festival park grounds. Everyone laughed loud and free. Larry added a comment. The mirth rose, ebbed, and rose again, before tapering off into patchy chuckles, a couple of snorts and one delayed, drawn-out titter. The Gang looked relaxed, as if they'd just eaten a big, heavy meal. They sat in a large circle, defining our blanket space—a covered tarp area under a tree, up the incline from the amphitheater, from where the performances reached us as pleasant background music.

I remember: Since the extraordinary program had brought higher numbers of attendants vying for lawn plots, it had taken five of us, instead of the usual three, to secure our territory.

Sleep deprived and hung-over from Friday night's party, Chaz and I were on runners' duty and had dragged ourselves to the queue by the gate to the amphitheater grounds. With us, we had Brett and Sam, spirited budding teenagers in whom the pressure could only convert to speed, as well as Ralph, our older, wiser strategist.

Waiting in line before the Jazz Festival's start is like generations holding season tickets to Fenway—except, we must race for the privilege every year, both weekend days. If we don't sprint like mad and land the exact spot on the park lawn, the people-watching won't be any good, the food court and the toilets too far away, and none of our friends will be able to find us; it'll be like having Christmas at an acquaintance's house. All this, Ralph reminds us of as he sits guarding the lawn chairs and coolers we will retrieve, once we've locked in our location.

Also that year we'd known many of the others in the line. We gossiped and joked—until the clock neared ten. Then performance anxiety started spreading like a wildfire. Cashiers or doctors, truck drivers or IT-consultants, we all became pioneers intent on staking our territory. As always, my nerves felt as if my body hairs were getting singed.

On the strike of ten, all three gates to the grounds opened. Every tarp-runner bolted. Pandemonium. I chased Chaz, who ran hugging our boxy, rolled up tarp under his right arm. There were people all over, everywhere. Without warning, our responsibility and the tension clogged my mind. Laughter squeezed past my held breath. I hiccupped sounds similar to a trumpeter's snazzy toots. I felt lost and on track, adrift as in an instant-only, pile-on jumble of jazz notes, while the ultimatum to our tarp-enterprise struck me as if my gut was a big drum.

I remember: I was so excited and apprehensive, running made me lightheaded. So much so, I imagined levitating over the crowd, seeing the mayhem from above as in a TV nature program showing an anthill built in compressed seconds: scrambling insects meshing and unraveling on the slope leading to the theater.

I reached Chaz, Brett and Sam already unfolding the plastic over 'our' space. Still laughing, I grabbed a corner of the tarp. It smelled musty and was enormous and unwieldy and made rough, angry-sounding swishes. I backed up to the crossway and the oak we liked. Then, presto, our area was covered. We dropped onto the tarp. Within minutes, all the other runners had landed too. The lawn was turned into a plastic patchwork of blues and greens, and the occasional browns or camouflage.

I remember the relief and hollowness after having been so revved up. I remember Chaz' pride and anticipation for a day of hanging with good, honest folks. No pressure, no stock market, no judgmental family members, no drought. No worries.

Some of us slept with our mouths wide open; some bantered with other festivalgoers at the border of our spot. A clip, filmed from the entry to the amphitheater, showed a band on stage with two trumpets and a trombone. The horn players had their instruments raised in the air as in fanfare. Short, fervent blows bobbed out into a unified sound that, even flowing from the TV's speakers, resounded as if it filled the theater's airspace with opalescent bubbles.

I sit on the floor in the living room and imagine I can see the air-beads and that I float among them, light and carefree and empty.

Sandwiches, hotdogs, chips and popcorn were being consumed. Beers were drunk. Madeleine passed her Tupperware of cut-up vegetables around. Bridgette and Carol inspected each other's needlepoint projects. We laughed. We ate. We drank some more. We talked and talked. There was Chaz, with that special glint in his eyes, lounging in a lawn chair, listening to Stan.

Stan had been vice president at Columbia Records. His stories from that time were the closest I'd ever get to 'sex, drugs and rock and roll.' He'd discovered Meat Loaf and played with Stan Getz, among others.

In the chair, on our tarp, while a trumpet solo streamed up from the amphitheater, Chaz lived vicariously through Stan's anecdotes. All the while the trumpeter's breath went from making