

# MEAT FOR TEA



VOL 14 ISSUE 3  
THE VALLEY REVIEW

BLACKCURRANT

# Meat for Tea: The Valley Review

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## guest salutation: Kelsey Clements

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Phillip Sena who died suddenly on June 12, 2019. He had a charming and magnetic personality with a brilliant smile and booming voice who would passionately discuss for hours topics ranging from politics, music, philosophy and art. His bold personality was contrasted by a softness and vulnerability that he shared with the people he loved. He was never afraid to share how he felt or be the first to say I love you to his friends. He had a remarkable way of making you feel like you were an admired and interesting person. We met while working in a call center where I often felt insignificant, and I was immediately stuck by how he listened and showed interest in me and our coworkers with an intensity I had never felt before. We eventually dated and were engaged at the time he passed. Although it was too short, I value every minute of our relationship and consider myself a better person because of him.

Phil also showed incredible care and understanding for the people that society has rejected or ignored, from social misfits to the mentally ill. When he worked for a social work agency he would talk with pride when his clients made progress and never became numb and disillusioned when they had setbacks.

While Phil had great compassion for the pain of others, he struggled greatly in his own quest for stability. While he was an advocate for people struggling with addiction, he was never able to break free from the shame that made him conceal his problem. He always asserted that what is often assumed about drug users – that it's a personality defect, it's due to a lack of self-control, and that you can get over it by trying harder – creates a cycle of blame, shame and secrecy resulting in a pain that can be blunted only by the source of his problems. Later on, I realized that what is expected of the family and friends of drug users – tough love and allowing the person to hit “rock bottom” when the truth is “rock bottom” is death – only accelerates this cycle.

Phil didn't want to hide or feel ashamed; and he didn't have a defective personality. If he were still here, he would be using this turbulent time to show that instead of stigmatization and punishment, people with addiction need to be embraced and not shamed.





## moonage daydream

Marlon Adams

young phil  
Marlon Adams

Oh my dear little angel. I pictured us growing old together, one of us shocking the other's grandchildren.

I did several drafts of this. I wanted to be succinct. I didn't want to wind up talking about myself, although we often joked that one of us couldn't tell their own story without telling the others (it's true). I wanted to be poetic and articulate without showing off. I decided this was it; I just had to shoot from the heart.

Trying to describe him is like trying to describe a planet: you just have to visit it. Planet Phil. Being in his presence would literally expand your own universe. As personalities go, his was definitely another sphere. I was proud to know him, and proud to call him my non-biological brother. I became even prouder that as we got older, he started asking *me* for advice, my opinion on matters. This incredible human wants to know what *I* think?? And whenever he would compliment me, I could only say "You helped me become this man you see before you!"

I met him at the same time I joined the marines, at the tender age of 18. He played a big role in my decision to drop out before actually landing in the shit. I had signed up for all the wrong reasons. I was insecure, didn't know who I really was, wanted to be perceived as hard, and was

just self-aware enough to feel that existential sting but not experienced enough to fully scrap with it. I endlessly wonder what trajectory my life would have taken otherwise. When we were young, I looked up to him, he dressed like no one else, spoke like no one else, acted to his own script, and listened to music that I had never heard of or could even comprehend at the time. I was a pathetic classic rock apologist-Zeppelin humper and when he first played me the Velvet Underground, *I did not get it*. Or almost anything else he was eager to show me. Nearly 20 plus years later, a large percentage of my musical vocabulary is due to his capacity for aesthetics.

And now, here I am in Boston, *thriving*. Phil always used to say that he could picture me living in a major city. He was right. I wish you could see me now Big Dog. And there's a huge Brazilian population here. I know that if you came to visit, you would be making contacts and connections with people within minutes. "You see that gringo? He's my boy, hook him up with the best produce, meats and spirits you have". Who knows what you would have done if you had made it out here. Mayor of Everett maybe.

My new housemate reminds of you so much. He's also a "people collector". Phil surrounded himself with the best talent humanity had to offer. If we went to another city, he had people there who were going to take care of us. He always knew the most interesting people. He treated them well, and they adored him well in return. Many of them are still dear friends of mine until this very day. A lot of them I only knew vicariously through Phil. But due to his ability to bring the best out of people, he helped me to become more confident, and to access my common joys with others. And over time I formed my own friendships with these wonderful people.

I don't know what I really think about reincarnation. We know all the matter and energy in the universe gets recycled. Why couldn't consciousness also be recycled in some fashion? I'd love to believe that we'll meet again some day, or that we already have, and this is a dance that we'll have again.

I've wondered about dreams, and if they're just complex hallucinations, or if there's some connection to an alternate reality that we haven't been able to fully comprehend because it's so distant from the everyday. Like seeing the ocean for the first time when you've never known how to swim let alone ridden a wave.

When I saw you, we were sitting in a cafe at a table, and you were being Phil, jabbering at me about some topic. I was amazed initially, but when it became clear that I could see you, but you were obviously oblivious to my presence, I thought "This isn't really Phil. I'm disappointed. I wish it was really him. It's just a dream. It's just a product of my imagination.". It was then I decided to stop the conversation, and I said, "I'm really gonna miss you, man".

And at that moment the whole world went silent, you hugged me, you said nothing, but I felt your embrace, and it was like you were really there. Maybe you were. I woke up right at that moment with tears in my eyes. I had been numb and hadn't cried since the whole thing began. It was cathartic. It left me at peace with the fact that maybe you really just had moved on to another country for an indefinite stay, where there's poor reception and no wifi, but we'll all be seeing you again one day or another.

And myself, along with several others, have all independently joked that any day you're gonna spring around a corner somewhere, some random day, apologizing that you had to disappear because you were involved in some South American coup that you never told anybody about. A double life. It's possible. But I saw you there, at your last moment. Either you're gone, or you are the most brilliant magician/illusionist in history. Knowing you Phil, both are equally possible. I hope you approve in the way I've honored your memory. I didn't dress in black at your funeral. I wore swim trunks and a red Hawaiian button-up. It was practical, given my broken ankle at the time, as well as tasteless. You're smiling out there, I know it. And they played Moonage Daydream. I was really thankful they didn't fuck that up.

And for those of you who don't believe me, he wanted his body to be propped on a dunking booth, and the funeral could only commence once someone had hit the target. He was only half-joking.

But that was what myself and a lot of other people loved about him: his ability to dabble in the dark waters of life and still emerge with something humorous and beautiful.

The only way to fill the gap you left us with, buddy, is to take everything we've ever learned from you and go out into the world with it wholeheartedly and unapologetically. Talk to people. Talk to everyone. Make them smile. Get to know them. Exchange ideas. Challenge them when necessary. Find beautiful things, have awesome adventures, and share them along with the resultant joy. Never stop being an intelligent, highly curious child. Never stop trying to bring the best out of yourself and those around you who give enough of a fuck to do the same.

I struggle to find any kind of meaningful ending to this. There is none. Life goes on. Enjoy it. From me to all of you: love yourselves, and each other. It's what Phil would have wanted.

Sincerely,

Marlon Sherid Adams



Cate Edon Higgins

# the meaty record review by Jeremy Dubs

Bryan Ferry: *Boys and Girls*

I'd like to talk to you for a moment about dreams - not the thing we do when we sleep, but the ideas we have, often grand, when fully awake. I'd like to empathize the importance of the dream itself rather than the outcome. There's already plenty of talk out there about dreams coming true, and I'm here to discuss the significant beauty of the ones that may or may not ever end up happening - those dreams which, once articulated, become both imaginable and very real in the sense that merely envisioning their manifestation is enough to satisfy us. Whether they come true matters not, as these dreams exist beyond time and the realm of possibility. The best ones outlive us, immortalize us, blossoming in the ether long after we cease to exist physically. In 1985, Bryan Ferry - Roxy Music's weirdo crooner oozing passion and cool - dreamt up and released the sensual pop solo smash titled *Boys and Girls*. Ferry, the eternal romantic visionary, likely hoped that these seductive sounds he was putting out into the world might lead to actual romance somewhere.

Little did he know, as this particular dream was much bigger than the dreamer, it just so happened that a couple of aroused young lovers in Brazil had a baby approximately nine months after *Boys and Girls* hit music stores. This writer jumps to no conclusions, but you can do the math: it's pretty clear there's a distinct chance that the happy couple heard the album's pulsating opener *Sensation* pleading "I need it all night long", that bass thumping, and decided to start humping, Ferry's fanciful dream taking on a life of its own, creating a new world of potential in the process. The product of that union was a boy from Brazil named Phil who would grow up to be a charming, well-dressed, socially-conscious intellectual with pristine taste in music, literature, and art. Much like Bryan Ferry, Phil was the embodiment of cool. He would one day move to America, meet the girl of his dreams, and get engaged to marry her. The dream doesn't end there, however, for Phil had a most outlandish epiphany that would make theirs the most memorable wedding ever: He would ask Bryan Ferry to be the musical performer, even if it meant spending the majority or all of their budget on hiring him and simply having the ceremony in their backyard. Phil even did the research and found out how much it would cost to book the legendary artist. He was half-serious about this dream - serious enough to make it happen if he could, but completely accepting that it might not come to fruition.

Sadly, Phil was, in Ferry's words, "windswept away" from this Earth far too soon. But the undying love he shared with his bride-to-be, his noble intentions of dedicating the rest of his life to her happiness, and his hopeful, ambitious vision of Bryan Ferry playing at their wedding are dreams which to this day remain untouched and completely intact. Perhaps Phil's brilliant plan is the subject of the haunting, chilling *The Chosen One*: "Make believing is the real thing, here today or gone tomorrow." I'd like now to ask you, the sweet reader, to make believe along with Phil.

Let's picture it for him and keep his dream alive: the bride and groom are in their backyard surrounded by family and friends who joyfully watch the newlyweds' first dance while an aging Ferry and his band are on a makeshift stage performing the classic *Slave To Love*, "Now the Spring is turning your face to mine. I can hear your laughter. I can see your smile." Yet another mystical tune with an aphrodisiacal beat begins. Ferry cries out, "The pain is gone and the pleasure has just begun." Still dreaming. Always dreaming. Still dancing. Don't Stop the Dance.

Everyone is dancing now. Bryan Ferry smiles and gazes triumphantly at the gorgeous lovebirds, beholding the materialization of a dream he once had, a dream which led to an album, an album which led to more dreams. This cosmic moment of magic alone solidifies Boys and Girls' place in history as a massive success. This is the reason we have ideas and create art. This is what we live for. This is what lives on after we die. The song Valentine's slow sultry groove starts as the star-crossed lovers embrace. Ferry reassures us, "There is no end to the great unknown", and the dream continues... Coincidentally, years ago Phil said to me, "I had a dream that you were playing a new song about how we live forever through the people we love and connect with during our life." That dream of his became a song called We Ain't Gonna Die. Thank you, Phil. Great idea, my friend.



Cate Edon Higgins



untitled  
Phillip Sena

10



untitled  
Phillip Sena



untitled  
Phillip Sena

# avocado tree

Michael Rothenberg

When hurricane Hermine came through our yard,  
shred the pink *Justicia*, sweet gum leaves,  
elm branches, and whole tops of pine trees,  
left clumps of moss like old Spanish beards  
soaked green on the lawn, flattened huge elephant ears,  
(there will be no tomatoes this year),  
left enormous tangles of skybound muscadine  
dislodged from their hold on the ancient live oak  
piled up in the drive, revealed the rumor of ginger  
hidden beneath the elm, broken blossoms  
wilting in the cleanup...

And the broad-shouldered man,  
in the golf cart, strapped for 74 years in overalls,  
tows a chainsaw through the neighborhood,  
and sets the neighbors free. Cuts the downed  
Loblolly pine into logs to be towed away.  
Cuts a path through the tall pine  
that almost fell on a neighbor's roof,  
and blocked the spindly white-haired lady's house,  
the gray-black and steel-roofed zen house  
two doors away. She rode out the storm alone.  
Her husband out of town in the Bahamas.  
We heard he's in Special Ops.

The rakes are out. With long pruning shears  
we cut the fallen branches away from the grapefruit  
and fruit-filled key lime tree slumped  
under the weight of debris but still alive.  
There's hope it will spring back into shape  
for the pie-busy winter season.

The lake is higher now, closer to our door.  
The water level low these past few years.  
The neighbor's dock still stranded in mounds of drought  
brown maidencane and dog fennel.

The ibis and wood ducks have reappeared  
among the lotus and lily pads.