

# *damsel rouge*



VOLUME 01  
**Spring 016**



**EXPLORER**  
MICHAEL HASSIN

# Damsel Rouge



SPRING 2016

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**STAFF ::** ENTER, NAMES, HERE

CONTENTS



POETRY AND PROSE

PERSON	6	<i>The First Look</i>
PERSON	8	<i>Title here</i>
PERSON	9	<i>Title here</i>
	10	
	12	
	13	
	15	
	16	
	18	
	19	
	22	
	23	
	24	
	26	
	27	
	28	
	30	
	32	
	35	
	36	
	37	

CONTENTS



ART

ALICIA CUOMO	(COVER)	<i>Magnolias</i>
PERSON	2	<i>Title here</i>
PERSON	7	<i>Title here</i>
	11	
	14	
	20	
	21	
	25	
	31	
	34	
	39	

# the first look



A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Dear reader,

Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Samantha Zimble", followed by a period.

Samantha Zimble  
Executive Editor

## **NATHAN**

and our adonis on psilocibin, mashing mushroom  
fungus into a lowfat chocolate pudding while we are all  
in the bathrooms, the bedrooms, barfing (up our own  
visions), he toils with the idea of himself all the holy  
night, taking self-portraits to see if he is really (still) there.

while we laugh, we laugh, we laugh at all our selves  
mashed up on the kitchen floor.



## **KIBBUTZ**

He was born on a kibbutz in Israel,  
where families earned their keep by manufacturing bedding.  
There are pictures of him playing in the dirt,  
the sun in his eyes.

I see him there, imagine his mother as she  
seams together rich fabrics  
into floral patterns and stuffs them  
with the thick inner layer that will keep him warm  
at night after they move across the world  
to a place where he will have to learn  
a word for snow.

I imagine her, just years before this,  
weary from a thread and cotton day,  
wandering into an old forgotten storage room  
where discarded bedsheets, quilts lay  
hugging the floor.  
She dozes off for a time  
until the young American, come to her country  
to fight its wars, to use his hands, to work the land  
in his rumpled denim and to maybe  
one day make Aliyah,  
found a way in,  
hunting for some gold thread  
but receiving instead two lonely lips  
to love to kiss on the mussed fabric  
and to one day watch as they mouthed  
the words for boy, baby,  
homeland,  
bruchah.

## UNTITLED

my maylover. flowerheaded honeysuckle of a child. dried-up dollarsigns and paint chips in her hair. africa in hot coals. august under the ceiling fan and high time to replace the crystal. august and i'm all salty wetness and they'll take me out to sea. a precious little bearchild of twenty.

white russians and a bruchah to a lovely girl's hallowed backside. naked girls on the walls, on the floors. beerscented cold vibrating basement staircases. always a boy and darkness, dimness. a feeling of displacement and cool, coppery humanity. numbness of the humans. a circle of boys baked in the winterwarmth of the upstairs. baking and mute. lifeless. the jazz gets faster, pounds against the ice cubes in the white liquid windowsill. a blessing to all unconsciousness.

book-swapping under the stars smoke the miracle of the union of our senses chopsticks and waistbands talk of eggs of making love of the warm chill of fall shifting to winter.

and reaching academic nirvana, we, the american spirits, shielded in caffeine overdoses, and the prayers of soup messiahs.

wanting to be high up, to be—transported to another consciousness where all the treetrunks are inscribed with french prose poems. wanting the body to be of air, all things pink to be of marshmallow or lemon-scented marmalade.

some thick, gooey heartstrings and toothaches and sex fills a sudden thingless room— so new to us like a toy that's still being invented. little do we know it is the most ancient secret of the soil. to life—huffing & moaning & rubber-scented-meshing-of-souls-life. and then we go buy ourselves ice cream to congratulate the body well spent, the heart well economized.

and there's a girl who chops up her thoughts into neat little half-inch lines, filling up pages of months, and hands him the bound and ribboned prize as he open-eye meditates out the glass door. it won't open anymore. a two-

month-old worn-out book of her everyday and he sits on it like a mother bird, transports it in his canvas bag, stops to smell her perfume in the ink now and then, but is ultimately illiterate to the thing, refuses it.

she bleeds citrus juice for his lime meringue tart that evening, reading him the directions off the backs of her eyelids.

and he? he's seen elephants walk through his skull—elephants under fire, bearing words like—be still, the avalanche is coming; be still, the peace is yet to be.



WHEN HONEST WOMEN LOVE

When honest women love, it is often times beautiful,  
filled with the aromas of freshly laundered date clothes,  
lotion, flowers  
the heat of hot rollers, of tan lines  
as men put on music to dance to;  
the sun dampens the curls along their hairlines  
and the earth gives under their bodies.  
And later they will pin a blouse or dress to the clothesline  
wash the blush from their cheeks  
and go to bed alone.  
But, if they knew how many of them did,  
would they choose to sleep in each other's arms instead?

TITLE

Text



**CHILINE**  
MICHAEL HASSIN

*Samantha Zimbler*

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## HOW TO EAT AN ORANGE

Dig your fingers into the bright coat, let the sweet guts bathe your fingertips.  
This is living.

Drive your nails into the supple sunskin and tear the spherical layer away;  
feel the way it gives itself to you, the way it offers itself to your thirsty hands.  
This is breathing.

And plunder! Let the viscous juices pour down your wrists;  
toss the stringy veins to the sides.

Slice, rip, finger away the nearly identical pieces of tender fruitflesh.

Chew. Swallow.

This, this is loving.



## THE HOUSE, AFTER SANDY

### I. The Girl

No airplanes flew by.  
Outside the window, I saw small dogs shivering  
helplessly as they floated down a river  
of boats and houses.

I spent the dark days cultivating mindfulness  
in a half-lotus position, drawing cats  
with lopsided faces and throwing them into the fire,  
creating my ow anachronisms.

And in the night there was green lightning  
that flashed for just a moment too long.  
Morning found small birds playing  
dead on suburban lawns.

The people around me were doing the strangest  
things in the dark.  
They said there would be a new baby boom,  
since people no longer knew what to do  
with their bare hands, their naked bodies.  
“Accept the chaos,” they must have whispered  
to one another in their unmade beds,  
beside the faint glow of old candles,  
battery-powered lamps.

My parents’ room smelled of holly,  
of gingerbread-scented oil burning,  
before the damage,  
but of oak, of wet bark, when

the ancient tree collapsed into the ceiling—  
panting, cold and wet—

scared, begging, too, to be loved,  
Its body now spent, now having fulfilled  
its purpose, it slept peacefully, its spine  
warped into an impossible angle  
with their unmoving bodies.

### II. The Father

“My whole body is a wasteland now,”  
she whispers to me in the chaotic dark,

and I can hear her cosmic selflove  
erupt into stars—  
she begs to be nakedly taken,  
to be thrust into the wrinkles of the  
bedsheets,  
to multiply, to prove her bodily worth.

She runs a softsocked foot against my  
freshly-pressed trouser leg;  
I feel the sudden urge to check on the broken generator.

I am afraid of a new attack,  
while her body is pumping with  
blood and want.  
I am afraid that this shelter, this  
life I have built,  
will come crumbling before I do.

And in the newfound silence of these dark days  
of meat rotting in the freezer while  
society is suspended in its own sudden humanness,  
I can hear the blood rush into my ears,  
microscopic cells bounding to the cardinal organs.

Do I sink with her? Submit to the apocalyptic present,  
the downwardmoving spiral of our history,  
our story? Do I long to please the neighbors,  
the children?

Or do I admit to myself that it is  
the woman's own vanishing selfhood  
that she loves,  
seeing who she is fall away in wisps  
around her, landing at her  
pointed heels?

The lightning strikes  
and green leaves burst through the ceiling,  
deciding my fate for me.

### III. The Mother

I want him to feel the wildness in me,  
the erotic hush that breeds  
a chaotic need in the close dark.

But there is something else swelling inside me,  
kicking its way around,  
searching for the secret  
sacred exit.

And, in this way,  
I am less alone than he.

I light the candles, thumb my prayer beads,  
and place a small white pill  
on my swollen tongue.

I force it down, the badness,  
force it inside me  
with the last of my saliva.  
I feel my throat begin to close  
in on us both,  
the terror begin to subside.

There is a heat that will not come.

It is alive in the shadows;  
the fat water plunging from the black sky  
sends traces of it—  
wet, ominous.

I watch on in solidarity  
as mother nature cries cold tears  
on the windows, which glow with  
the dizzy electric chaos outside.

The vast wetness is inescapable.  
I feel the entire axis coming unhinged  
beneath us;  
the entire room is falling victim  
to this savage and inescapable night.

### IV. The Tree

There is no home for the ancient.  
We have no graves, no palace doors.

Our mothers live in the dust of other lands.  
It is possible that our souls have already expired,

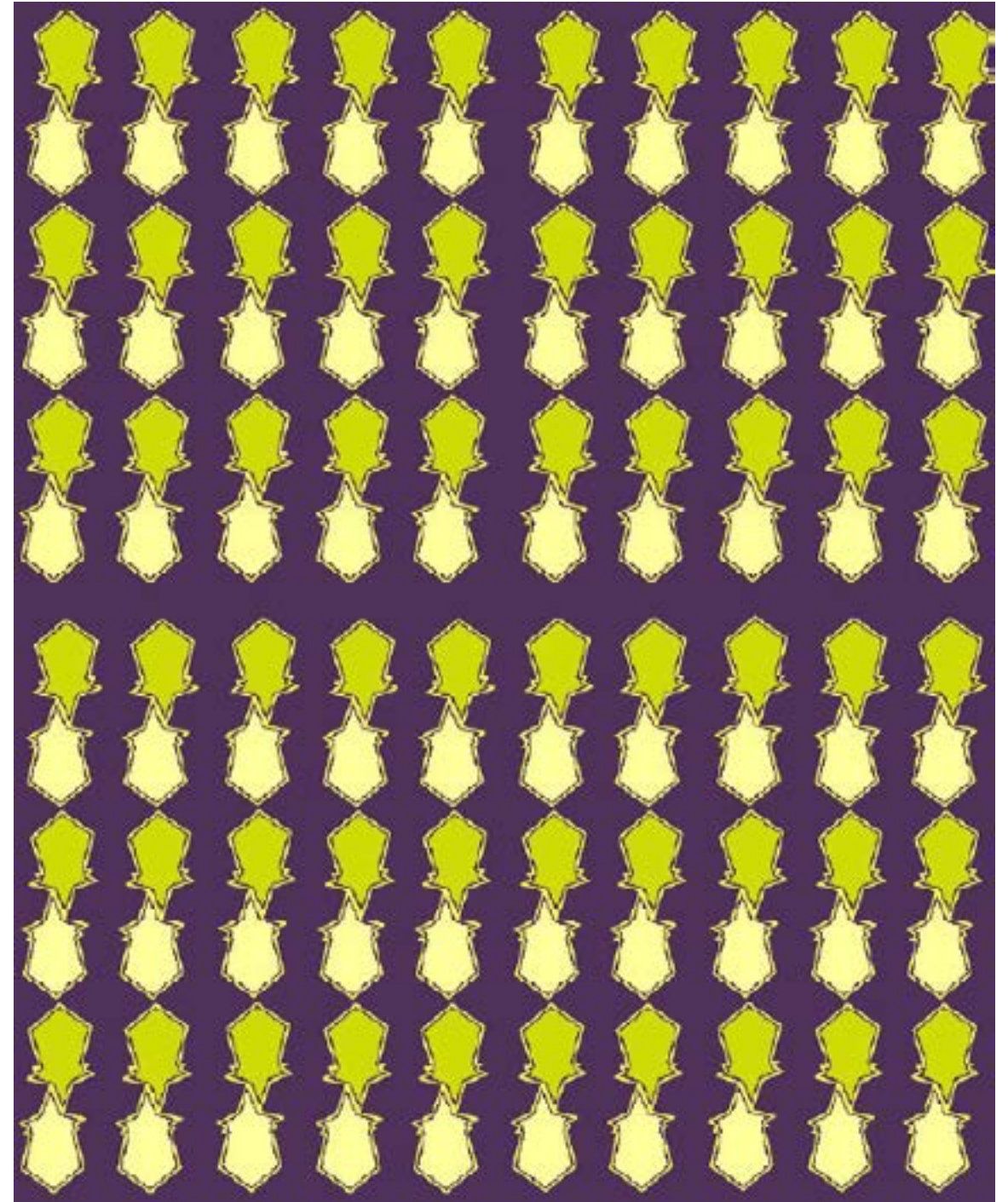
fled to seek the warm newness  
of refuge, salvation.

We are the product of our bones now,  
in the gray night.

There is nothing left to see from above.  
My once unyielding spine of oak is cracking  
with the effort of each falling leaf.  
These wooden limbs will soon give way.

I am dizzy, growing weary from the static,  
the electric clouds above a rushing land.  
The ground is not at peace tonight;  
It wraps around my roots  
and pulls me down.

Nothing is uncaused. The currents in the air  
have spoken.  
What is left of me bows down  
to kiss the trembling earth.



## **BEDTIME RITUALS**

### **I.**

In the bedroom lingers the warm scent  
of sex and tofu,  
suspended in their still steaming  
cloud of passion,  
the window shut and locked  
so as not to let in the sobering winter air.

### **II.**

My mother is weeping over the dessert  
burning in the oven  
while I am slowly peeling off my face,  
piece by piece, upturning a layer of skin  
and discarding it  
where no one will notice  
or think to look.

### **III.**

I am going to stick my head into a  
vat of bubbling oil  
until all of the badness is gone,  
burned out.  
It will take days to get the smell  
out of my hair,  
to get my face to look right again,  
but maybe my eardrums will burn  
up and my skin will glow more brightly  
when I am through.

I will light a stick of incense

and place it at the altar on my nightstand  
where my pills and cords can feel it, too.  
And I will bury my utensils three  
feet into the ground  
and dig them up again after a few days.

### **IV.**

I will sacrifice my left hand if I  
have to, my right.  
And in the smoking stardust that collects  
around my scrubbed body, I will  
bloom again in newness,  
all the bad thoughts having evaporated behind me.

I will hug my pillow and wait  
for the good to take over.

### **V.**

Release me from this cold  
rain that pours over my  
city like vacant tears,  
all too familiar,  
like something distant,  
something reaching-for—  
ungraspable.

### **VI.**

Rhythms belching beautifully  
out of old gas ovens  
and cantankerous

antiquated heaters  
people mistake for ornate  
statement pieces,  
decorating a decorated life  
all the more.

## VII.

The sullen cries of this sunken city,  
the sudden crises, the sudden screams  
of dislocation, of dystopia.  
I am building a dollhouse from  
cracked blocks in the pitch dark,  
unsure still where the people will fit,  
or how.

There is no way to leave the  
underworld without escape.  
The only escape is one of  
courage, of control—that one  
cannot look back for a second  
but must carry her torch forward,  
onward into the light.  
The delicate pieces of what we've lost  
have since been erased, rebuilt  
into something more lasting, at the core  
of some communal structure, some  
poem,  
somewhere.

We all bleed, but bleed different blood;  
the soul is liquid, the mind a frost and

the heart is the fire  
raging mad, boiling the liquid  
to a hot blood red that comes like tears  
when flesh meets flame.  
To burn and bleed, or to never burn at all?  
To burn is to bleed and we are blind  
to the light of heat, of its  
evasive torch, its touch.

## VIII.

We are all of this world and the next.

Indulgences of freedom:  
When I shower I hardly  
notice the sultry silence  
of my body, the calm  
whispers of water;  
it is the silence of freedom  
and future,  
because I can turn it on at will,  
but, even better,  
and more important, I can  
choose to turn it off.

## IX.

Barreling out of the blue;  
the rhythm of the soul is such sweet music to listen to;  
the wintry withering within.

## X.



It's like that statue where you don't know

if you're the small boy  
or the grown old man...

*Samantha Zimbler*

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## OUR HANDMADE DAYS

I remember what it was like to be bare—  
coated in something like amber or crushed petals you called skin.  
The drooping May mornings when you  
painted my body in dew;  
An ocean of dew—the holy water from which  
the fishes swam up and tickled our feet,  
crowned in dandelions and seaweed.

I remember the way we floated down,  
down to hug the surface of the noiseless water,  
down to meet the melancholy  
sea of winter.  
Our bare peach skin,  
bright bare hands cupping carrot flowers, we floated  
under a sky of red berries and dragonflies.  
We—the new messiahs—  
drifting naked to our holy land.

## ORCHID

Drowsy incorporeal mess-  
slouching; swaying on a sidestreet  
oh, hold the living soul before it goes  
Plato knows what it once was  
tired, fainting, tumbling  
rhythm of figures moving silently-  
a senile deafness lumbering its way home,  
heavy pain under clear blue,  
and tobacco stains in the living  
room

ghost-like. soul-fed. upset. repeat.

America, with her concrete veins,  
chain-smoking in metallic blue  
easy chirpworld digging up smoke in a multicolored den  
subspace rolling fire photos of wet angles and Jesus in  
firehalo knifing open the cigars so the dusty guts  
spray on bare arms  
my heart is here  
backbones exposed in the soft light where  
we were the rats in a labyrinth  
Remember when we stood on the edge of a painted world?  
first words blistering the air,  
daisy petal scars and melancholy breath  
smoke of fresh gray pure day Oh! with the stems  
we left in the grinder the rose petals touching the  
lamp light resurrected, rising from Pinot Noir bottles  
spelling: wordfresh toleration!  
Blow through this holy dinerworld  
Meatless wonder in ankleskins harmonizing to the  
firepitch in the car alarm bleeping in unity disappearing  
before the beat stops Oh! hold fire land

pump our blood out our wombs  
dancing day made NEW-

I found your oldsoul hidden on a crossbow

When you drifted backward,  
you shifted blue, as tumbly as our  
cotton clouds,  
my teathy sire, my cloudlover  
in olive tones dribbling a quartz stone  
as our folly gritters away -  
I am an open gate,  
come breathe my fertile air



**COLLAGE**  
SAMANTHA ZIMBLER



**SCOOTER**  
MICHAEL HASSIN



PARINIRVANA

There will be no flutter in the loins, no dharma to teach  
when I am gone.  
I will pass on my bowl of bones, my yellow robes,  
to another man who sees the mind as mirrorless,  
not filthy or cracked, unneeding of our ineffective,  
halfhearted minds.  
I will find the place that does not know  
the narcissistic moaning of the body.

There will be only ashes beneath my skin,  
a glorious heat flickering in some  
unknowable, impenetrable realm within,  
with nowhere to bun but inward.

I will sit as if in warm sunlight  
through the tyrannical winter dark,  
will vanish into the present, as blank  
and thin as the surface of glass, of a river.

There will be no divine light to follow,  
only a cosmic hum that will bellow  
inward below the surface of the earth,  
making only the tips of leaves flutter.

Hush water, hush air; you are as holy as I—  
have never known a need for robes and temples,  
have already attained the purest salvation.  
When my body dies, when that chain  
of heartbreaking mindfulness, gesture,  
and mantra erupts into sparks and sublime dust,

I will ride the gilded elephant,  
come from the westernmost heaven,  
into the promised land, the rising sun,  
the land of the morning star.

TITLE

Text

## **PATIENCE**

Patience is a tree waiting through the dead of winter  
Is knowing how long it takes the sky to lighten its gray load  
Is the emptiness in the thief's own pocket  
Is waiting here for you, hands pruning with fresh salt water—  
The only sap this dead tree knows.  
It's knowing where I likely left you but never being sure  
It's ascending to a high arc over the Atlantic  
When the heart's holster remains in the Pacific;  
How do you fit the bullet back into the gun?  
It's that rotating, dewy, world-blindly lunar repetition  
Stretching out the reins of our days in slow pulses  
That drives madness into the hands of thieves,  
An inescapable itch, a friskiness in the hands of the gunman.

## **WOMB OF THE ATLANTIC**

He rows her out to the Atlantic.  
He makes love to her—  
salt and semen and holy water  
stain the thick oars,  
their tongues alive with spices.  
She gives birth on his dusty floor,  
her womb all seawater and  
smoldering waves,  
dark wet curls plastered  
on her aching shoulders.  
A babe walks out into the sunlight  
and honeydew air,  
branded with charcoal,  
thirsting for fire.  
His mother's gaping palms wipe the  
caked dirt and sweat from his brow  
with a paisley headscarf. She feeds him;  
Fried fish, pale rice, saltwater—  
the holy trinity.  
He is born in the rainy season  
but the sunlight scorches his fingertips.  
He will soon be forgotten,  
swept away by a high tide.

## STONES

You wanted to be free-spirited  
to experience a release.  
You escaped behind a cluster of trees  
and bent close to the ground  
clumsily held a root with both hands  
and urinated on the earth  
letting go a sound unlike the sound inside a toilet  
creating dark, wet stones  
that were not as extraordinary dry.  
I watched you pause before getting dressed  
letting the sun heat you  
until you came to me  
warm and laughing  
a little damp still between the legs.

## SILVER FISH

Deep below the surface of the ocean,  
at the bottommost point where no sunlight can penetrate,  
translucent fish swim around in icy darkness,  
blind to one another, to themselves.

I wonder about the silver fish  
that live below the ground,  
beneath suburban lawns  
on which pet dogs urinate,  
sterilizing the once fertile grass.  
A few feet below swim coins, cigarette butts,  
scraps of paper with the words all worn off,  
never to be read again by human eyes.

It is all down there, even now,  
entrenched in the warm earth  
that grows, over them and over them—  
the still carcasses of rodents and deer,  
torn-up manifestos, remnants of holiday dinners,  
the meat silverware contaminated by the dairy set,  
burned and forgotten by orthodox women.

I begin to see visions of silver fish everywhere,  
deep under our bones and muscles,  
floating in utter darkness until we  
open our mouths and let in the sun.  
I wonder what swims below them,  
and what swims below what  
swims below them.

I stare at the dead ground  
and see a bit of green poking through the dirt.  
I look for a pair of swollen gills, a fin or two;  
Leaning in, I find that it is no more than a bottle cap,  
already half-sunken into the earth.

# the last look



A NOTE FROM THE ISSUE EDITOR

Reader,

Yours,

Name  
Issue Editor

**TITLE**  
**ARTIST**

**ABOUT US ::**

We are published by the people of something with no funding. The magazine provides an outlet for creative expression, publishing student short fiction, poetry, prose, photography, illustrations, graphic art, and more. To learn more visit: [website.com](#).

**SUBMISSIONS ::**

Although the deadline for our next issue has not yet been decided, submissions are currently being accepted. Please send all submissions via e-mail to [untitledzine@gmail.com](mailto:untitledzine@gmail.com).

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*“Insert quote here...”*  
samantha zimbler, pg. 8