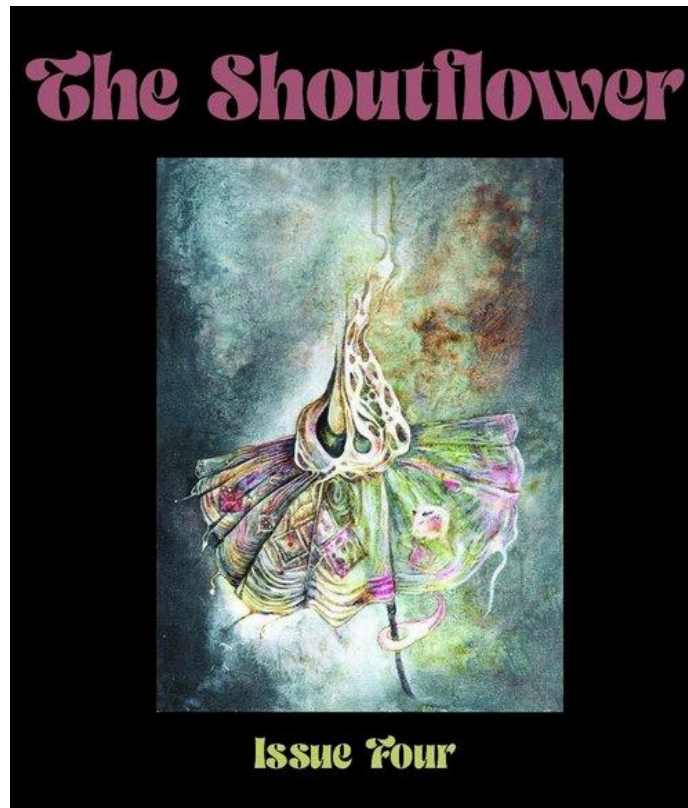


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Cover Art by Anis Tabaraee

The Seduction of Fruit

The dry season in the South Bay. A beautiful day everyday blue and full.

It's a joke. A beautiful day. Another beautiful day, a day sky blue.

A day for tapas at the sidewalk cafe—olives, patatas brava, manchego with membrillo.

The waiter notices my daughter has eaten only the figs from her serving of Ibérico ham with figs.

The waiter notices my daughter and notices she has eaten all her figs from her Ibérico ham and figs.

He brings her a crystal dish, a dish not on the menu and unasked for -- fruit split open to show its pinkish furred interior.

She stabs one slippery half with her fork and brings it to her lips, sucks the slippery insides, and crunches the subtle seeds.

“I see you enjoyed your figs.” The waiter lifts the crystal dish scattered with stems and bits of skin.

I want it to stop. She is not a peach, a plum, a fig, *fruit of the female mystery*...¹

Her lips are not berries, or *Plump unpeck'd cherries*², her cheeks are not apples.³ She is not *ripe for the pickin'*.⁴ (Or when old, like me, *over-ripe, bursten*⁵, shriveled on the vine.)

Broad branches, Eden's garments, and pendulous velvet fruit.

Unripe figs bleed milk. Ripe figs scent readiness to the wasp.

This is not a metaphor. The summoned female burrows inside blossom lined flesh.

Her wings are stripped from her body as she struggles through the narrow opening.

-Amy Beth Sisson

¹ D.H. Lawrence 1924, *Figs*

² Christina Rossetti 1859 *The Goblin Market*

³ Refers to Edmund Spenser's 1595 poem *Epithalamion*.

⁴ The Trumains 1977, *Ripe for the Pickin*

⁵ D.H. Lawrence 1924, *Figs*