

## THE BULL LOVER

she watches him bevel the merkin out of pigskin, a fragrant manna tanned seven summers. tail of woven hemp, outer lips a speckled iris glowing in the sun, freckled with jimsonweed oil and the urine of a spring heifer known to graze the wild cyclamen above Souda Bay. where the sorry muses and sirens fought a musical contest and two islands muscled up from the losing froth. he weighs down the heifer's legs with eight burlaps of sand. *To combat the winds*, he says. winds that race up the seamount and draw speed through limestone bevels. there, as not much more than a waif, she used to watch him, only him, from a pillow car drawn by four manservants, only him below double-axes chiming in the wind. so methodical, that Daedalus, she tells herself, and kind beyond measure. *A perfect thing*, he says, *can only be made by a despairing hand*. the stirrups above her clang like timbrels, below harnessworks bolted into the ornate spines of two bronze harps. he guides her hands, her feet into woolen stirrups. again and again, he makes sure the cuirass straps are just right. *Are you sure?* she nods. he closes the belly-hatch above his head, but not before he stills himself to study her in the narrowing. she closes her eyes, steadies herself in the serene eye floating between her eyes. she sees a bull leaper suspended in the air, hands thrown to the sky, hears the crowd, the chalky landing of feet. she tastes something in the sweat dripping off her nose, a cedar resin. down the canal she spots the snorting chimera trotting up the meadow—dustrope tail hooped and swaying, gray horns pitched low as if to track her through the yellow iris kicked up in pillars of dust around him. her bull, still whiter than the snows of Ida. the hailstorm begins as her only portal goes dark with snout, the basso-profundo of his bellowing, his tongue craning in to quiet the hail. in her banishment, she will remember his mad eel skidding left and right, how the hail returned, wind wrestled wind, and the rage of that snout giving voice to *I know you, I have always known you*.



*Lady Grand* by John Elkerr  
3.5" x 4.5"  
Ink on paper

Text by Stephen Eric Berry