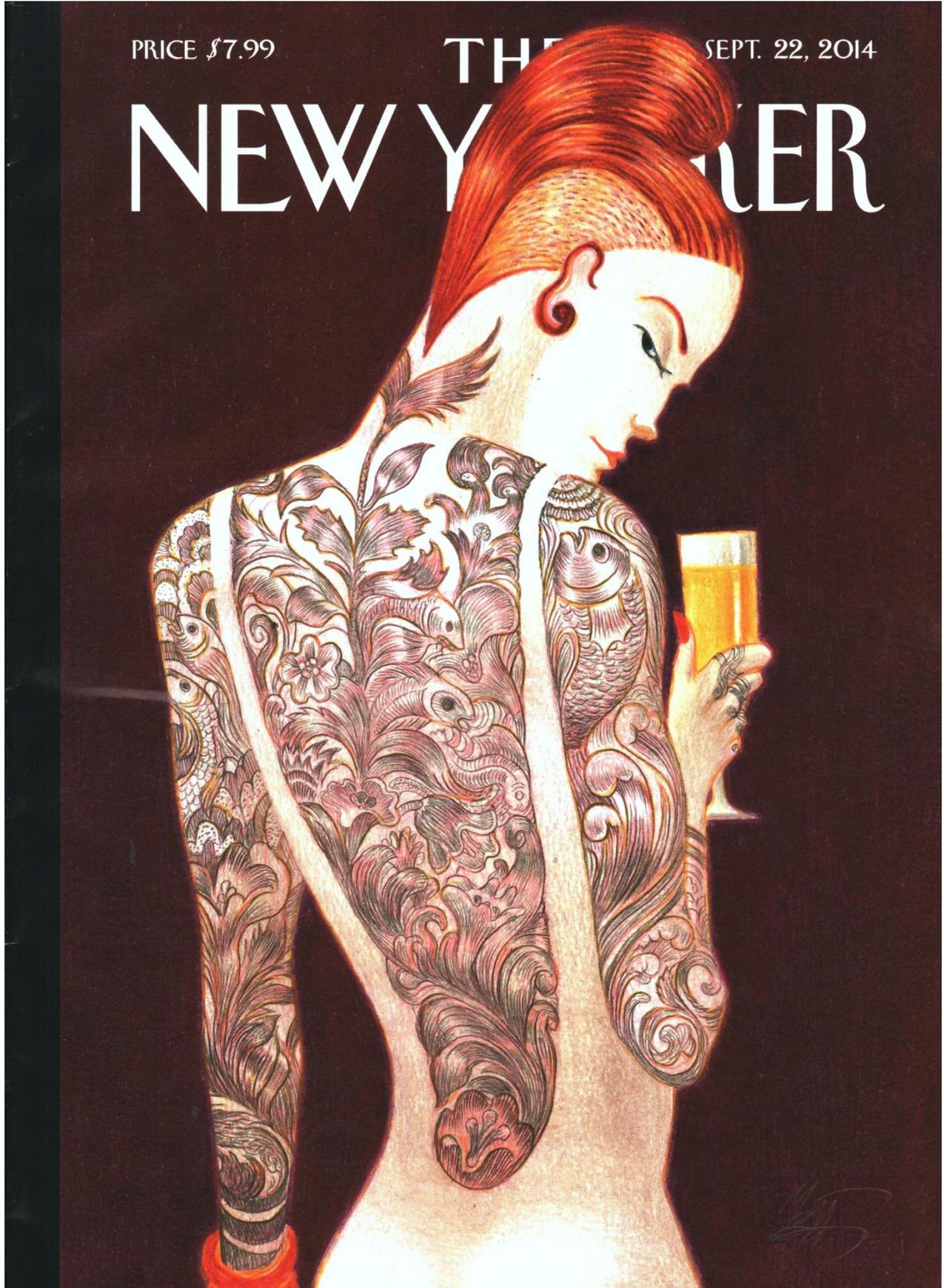
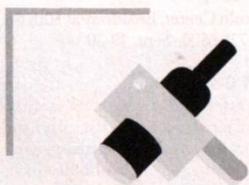


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FOOD & DRINK

BAR TAB CHAMPAGNE CHARLIE'S

180 Tenth Ave. (212-929-3888)

The British music-hall comedian George Leybourne, born in 1842, came to be known as Champagne Charlie, the titular character from his popular song. As Charlie, he'd fluff his Piccadilly weepers (bushy sideburns) and strut the stage, swilling Moët (contractually, he was allowed to drink nothing else in public), while warbling, "Who'll come and join me in a spree?" His exuberance for bubbly is being kept alive in the front garden of the High Line Hotel, which inhabits the former General Theological Seminary, in Chelsea.

One late-summer evening, patrons in designer sunglasses lazed beneath gas lamps, slurping oysters and sipping Chandon Brut, or Étoile Brut, or an eight-hundred-and-fifty-dollar magnum of Dom Perignon Vintage Blanc '04 from large coups. (If you buy the apocryphal tale that Marie Antoinette's breast inspired the glass's shape, you'd infer that she was a C-cup.) One vertically challenged gentleman worked on a bottle with a blonde flashing a large diamond. He dwelled on his medical maladies: "I woke up and smelled the formaldehyde. It was straight out of the nineteenth century." A nun wandered into the garden, and was ignored by its occupants. Perhaps they were unaware that "Champagne Charlie" 's melody was adapted for a Salvation Army hymn—"I am trusting in the cleansing flood./Bless His name, He sets me free"—but its sentiment they understood: they rode the sparkling flood's tide into the night.

—Emma Allen



TABLES FOR TWO

THE GORBALS

98 N. 6th St., Brooklyn (718-387-0195)

"I REMEMBER WHEN there were hookers on this street!" a longtime Williamsburg resident exclaimed as he sat down at the Gorbals on a recent evening. These days, there's a small-batch coffee roaster, an exercise studio specializing in the Lagree Fitness Method, and a "unique retail concept" called Space Ninety 8. The latter, brought to you by Urban Outfitters, that bastion of commodified early-aughts hipsterdom, features the company's "reworked vintage" line, plus a rotating array of pop-up shops (Forage Haberdashery, Stolen Girlfriends Club) and the Gorbals, an East Coast outpost of the Los Angeles restaurant that Ilan Hall, of "Top Chef" fame, opened in 2009.

In a cagelike mezzanine overlooking displays of distressed denim and handcrafted deerskin medicine bags, the Gorbals gives off the vibe of a converted Bushwick warehouse, circa 2005; the flimsy floorboards trembled in time with the bass thumping from an event below. As diners studied the menu, divided into "Portlandia"-esque categories—Field, Barn, Stream, Coop—an endearingly earnest server, hands clasped, offered tips: "Talk amongst yourselves"; "I don't like to usurp anyone's natural interests"; "Both the chef and myself like to promote sharing."

When it comes to the whole roasted pig's head, sharing becomes more of a mandate—although the server allowed, "I watched a man eat the whole thing himself the other night. He was hammered. He was kind of bridge-and-tunnel. I can say that, 'cause I'm from Long Island." Hall is also from Long Island, Great Neck, where he grew up eating the traditional Jewish food that he now seems to take pleasure in subverting with pork: the crackly-skinned pig's head sometimes comes with thick, charred tortillas made from matzo meal, and matzo balls wrapped in bacon are reminiscent of Scotch eggs, which is fitting, considering Hall's Scottish heritage. (The Gorbals is the name of a once Jewish area of Glasgow.)

Out of soup, the matzo balls were a shade too wet, and some will find the carve-it-yourself pig's head hard to grapple with, both literally and figuratively. But, as much as the Gorbals can feel like a parody of itself, a lot of Hall's food is seriously good. Broccoli was deep-fried to a delicate, candylike texture and saturated with sweet soy and vinegar. Thrice-cooked thick-cut fries were bathed in hoisin gravy and tangled with Vietnamese pickles, sriracha, and shreds of pulled pork for the superb banh-mi poutine. A tender leg of wood-grilled rabbit came nestled in microgreens and tart, juicy vinegar-cured cherries.

The brownie with Vidalia caramel and candied onions is about as weird as it sounds, and better, the pungent astringency of the onions playing nicely off the creamy richness of the chocolate. By dessert, the bass had died down. On the roof deck, men in graphic tank tops milled about the bar. Hall sat at a picnic table, not watching his newest reality show, "Knife Fight," which was being projected onto a brick wall.

—Hannab Goldfield

Open daily for dinner. Dishes \$6-\$41.

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL KRALL