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## Stained Sheets

Eugene Ring

Thad Rutkowski

Carl Herr

Mindy Levokove

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# STAINED SHEETS

Tasteless

This coffee tastes like cardboard. Across the room on the stovetop, the glass percolator sits still with dark liquid. I'm hungry again. I didn't eat enough oatmeal.

In the fridge, there is a rectangular box with a plastic window. In the window I see a chocolate and plain donut that looks like two bulging eyes that can't believe what they saw-only they're not looking at me.

This cardboard cup of coffee that went cold too quickly has to be dumped. Of course grinds paint the sink. What do I need to drink? Tea? Herb tea? I've had little luck steeping lately when the hot, caffeine-free beverage tastes like the non-chlorine bleached tea-bag. Maybe something in the water won't let the herbal, fruitful bounty free.

Outside cold air waits with it's sting. How do I taste, in time, nothing?

Eugene Ring

## SOME POEMS

SOME POEMS ARE STRIPED  
SOME POEMS HAVE FUR  
TALONS DRIPPING TEETH  
THE BOX OPENS UP  
AND OUT JUMPS PICCOLO

PICCOLO SAYS, "YOU DON'T  
KNOW ME BUT I'M ON TV  
THE LATE SHOW AND I  
GET HIT IN THE MOUTH  
MY TOOTH IS LOOSE AND IT BEGINS TO CRY  
THE BUS SHOWS UP UP  
ON A DIME, SPINS,  
DIVES, SEES A BARACUDA."  
A MAN WITH A TOOL BELT  
HE MUST BE A WORKING MAN  
I SAY HELLO WORKING MAN  
ARE YOU WORKING?  
IS IT ALL WORKING?  
I WRITE THIS DOWN IN A SUBWAY STATION.

RUSH HOUR -EVERYONE IS RUSHING  
I'M RUSHING TO WRITE THIS DOWN  
A BELL RINGS, ELEPHANTS WALK  
ABOVE US. SNAKES BREATHE BELOW  
EXHALING DIAMONDS ON  
THE WALLS OF THE TRACKS.

MINDY LEVOKOVE

## THE SWIM

I'll not dispel your mind.  
You'll not perish in a deluge  
of words here.  
A typhoon will not pick  
you up to discard you in far  
waters, lost trying to decipher,  
still clutching this paper,  
reading this as an  
archeologist would, searching  
to find truth or reason,  
because if there's any sense  
you'll be the one to find it.  
I'll be simple, not use metaphors  
or similes that'll leave you  
in a turning torrent.

There are times I go back  
turn the hour glass over and over,  
tell myself: life is strange,  
stranger our acceptances.

We were human,  
and had become stranded  
in our own cloud-built castles.  
In the end, there is so much  
you can hold onto  
each other before you fall,  
and kick your way to land.

Evie Ivy

bruce weber

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STAINED SHEETS & THE ABC NO RIO READING SERIES SUPPORTED  
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## WHY WE SHOULD NOT BOMB IRAQ

We should not bomb Iraq for the same reason Iraq should not bomb us. Picture getting bombed (with explosives): You search the sky for planes; then, when you see them, you head for the bunker or the trench. You listen to the sounds of bombardment, notice the walls of your shelter begin to crumble. After the planes leave, you climb out and survey the damage. You look at the rubble, step across the gravel. You search the sky again, scanning for telltale flying dots that could be more bombers heading your way. Maybe your next step is moving to the country or the desert, off the beaten path, assuming you are still alive.

No fun, right?

Thad Rutkowski

## THE GARBAGE MAN

I remember how scary and exciting it was to hide behind a bush and wait for the garbageman. You'd smell him before you saw him. He was a big guy with a pungent cigar in a dirty orange suit. He'd pick up what we didn't want, and with a twist of his mighty arm, hurl it into the hungry machine. It would be crushed, dragged up a slimy slope, and devoured. If I were in a sermonizing mood, I'd say that Satan is the Garbageman. He who eats my waste. That's why he smells bad- he does the work I'm too good for. Who wants to eat their own garbage? I'm already burdened with obligation. Satan is a tough guy with a tough job. He won't bring clarity to your mind, like Allah. He's not lovey-dovey, like Jesus. You can't learn meditation at his feet, like Buddah. He's not a nourishing mother like Sophia, the Greek goddess of wisdom. Satan keeps the world from suffocating in its own garbage-until I learn to take out my own. If I can learn to cleanse myself properly, there'll be no need for the Gabageman. He'll come around, of course, but find noting on my stoop to occupy himself with. God, teach me to eat my own garbage - and if my breath stinks, give me eloquence.

K.L.

## THE LAST OF WILLIAMSBURG

High tide on the East River  
Rolls past crumbling piers  
Disintegrating before our eyes  
This foot-wide cement berm  
Barely connects to the mainland  
Less of the pier remains every time I come here  
The grass-covered earth is mostly replaced  
By tide-swept rotting planks holding up air  
This narrow river perch will soon be inaccessible  
Assuming it remains  
A little further out  
Speedboats glide past the Con Ed plant directly across  
And on this side is the shiny new waste-transfer station  
Reminding us that less changes than we think

PETE DOLACK

## CONE TRAVELS

Dr. Cone is tied into a metal frame and lowered over the edge of the map. Rapidly he leaves the world of concepts behind, plunging instead into a land of forces and junctures. They do not see him at all in this new land. He is felt the way a dream is felt, gone before they can even be sure what he was. The journey remains incomprehensible to him, memorable at points only because of the state his mind was in when he reached them. The details are not there at all, almost as if he had read about it in a book. And perhaps he had. The map and arrows seem to lead him only in circles, back ever again to the point where the rivers start, at the edge, cut irrevocably like the slice of the knife that sends the lucky ones back again and again from the altar to sit with the gods.

- BOB HEMAN

whose revolution?

who's revolution? your revolution? max's revolution? glady's revolution? huh? what? revo. revo. lution. woodstock? berlin? bratislava? birmingham? lets have a revolution! let's make a revolution? come on paint a pretty picture of a revolution. a revolution less guns or tanks or missiles or bombs or blood. greasless. stainless. viewed only on video tape. archived for later playback on tv after the scars have healed. after the dead've risen up like peasants in chxaing province minus crucified holes in their hands. a revolution without theorists sticking their middle finger out at generals and their double agent mistresses. revo/revo/ution. that went well together. like trotsky diego rivera and his painter wife frida kahlo. raising fists to the sky. fighting for the proletariat. yes trotsky rivera and frida started a mexican revolution. in paint. in body fluids. in revolutionary phrases. revo. revo. o pretty little revo. pretty little revolution.

Abilify

The sky is unblemished.  
The pavement is no longer cut with sharp edges.  
The subway cars travel in one direction.  
The traffic lights are no longer filled with cascading colors.

The nights are no longer decorated with an unquiet peace.  
The days are not tarnished with bitter embellishments.  
The food is not coagulated with poison.  
The conversations are no longer laced with bitter undertones.

The scientific deduction of the psychotic monstrosities  
Through the alchemistic delusions have ceased  
The plea to the insane asylum to claim me, devour me  
And cleave me in two has been terminated

The rendering of the fat into soap and the soap into toxic lather  
Has become an after thought  
The quarks are free to wander without cause or care  
For once in their life

The knives are put back in the drawer  
The spoons do not gouge out eyes  
The forks do not draw blood  
The plates are not filled with sacrificial offerings

The leaves have withered off the trees yet I know  
They too will return in time  
As they unfurl  
So will the inner doldrums across the clear aced lands  
In my mental realities

Carl Herr

## SALVADOR LIKED THIS PAIR

He had sailed the sea she came out of.  
Why shouldn't he take her on a date?  
He was young; she was perennially young.  
She let a streamer hang in her wavy hair.  
Give me the sailor's cap.  
Of course he gave it to her.  
She didn't put it on.  
She said she'd throw it into  
the lights of this town.  
This is a brassy town - she said.  
That's an old fashioned saying - he told her.  
I guess you're more up to date - she replied to this.  
They were a dancey pair.  
In every music spot they stopped the crowd.  
This place is just a cube - he spat.  
Hey - she cooed - we'll be  
counter to our calling  
if we can't make it new wave.  
And the jazz was timeless in the glitter muted color  
as they danced midst the crowd in th e dark.  
Morning has come  
You looked as beautiful as a boat  
lying on your side in the darkness.  
I'm not sure which one said it.  
I'm not sure which one smiled in answer.  
Day welcomed them,  
as it does all lucky people.

BOB HART

## That Season Out of Season

He always loved the blue  
Tone imbedded in her voice  
That bass hint of sadness  
That scored her words  
Made her melancholy sweet

But in this winter  
Of verdant frost  
A season out of season  
With itself he bit  
Into her blue

And they crackled onto the lip  
Of the moon  
Repelling all shadow  
When last seen  
They were limbo rocking

Their way to Jupiter  
And that was the end  
Of the blues, the blues  
The harmonious blues

Joan Kitcher-White

CODE ORANGE

Coordinate necessary security efforts with armed forces or law enforcement agencies

We, here no longer star-struck bound up in snowdrifts chasing the sunnyside of bitter streets.

CODE ORANGE

take additional precaution at public events

We, here who wait for the light at the end of the tunnel to come to us, move forward with sound of angry rumble.

CODE ORANGE

prepare to work at an alternate site or with a dispersed workforce

We, here who cut fine lines of forefathers beat our chests but sweep away their ashy footprints always in a hurry.

CODE ORANGE

restrict access to essential personnel only

We, here walk in and out through unlocked gates small hot mouths, sink into bowels slide silent through mental maps away from the left on to the next eyeing the signs learning the codes

BRIAN BOYLES

Keeping Memory Safe

You gather The moments Of our love, And keep them Safe For us, Like flower petals, Pressed Between the pages, In the book Of your heart.

The night When, First I told you I loved you, Looking Into your darkling Eyes, and We shared Our first Deep And gentle Kiss.

You remember, And, remembering, Tell me. And we read them, Again, The pages. Then,

Together, We count them, Our blessings. And joining Grateful Hands, Silently, Our hearts Give Thanks.

Horses

My desk at work is semi-enclosed by Partitions I have adorned With pushpinned Horses Zebras an errant Tiger or two. Most of the Xeroxes of Photographed or painted Horses look like the Equines of my youthful dreams: Appaloosas Arabian Stallions otherworldly white Fellocks white manes white Every equine eyelash white, all bright-irised Orbs observing hours I spend Editing in my seat.

My desk at work is semi-enclosed by Partitions I have adorned With white Horses stubbornly tossing Voluptuous necks letting Frizz-free hairs of their manes fly Wherever these regal creatures want them to. One black Mare, too, coat shimmering With unchastened pride trots Across verdant terrain. Plus a Plebald, ears Ever alert to what must be done in time Between running, jumping, and flying free.

Iris N. Schwartz

NANNY DEAREST

My next significant other will be a goat-Around her green pasture-My love shall be a moat. Our passions will rise with the chewing of cud-The union sanctified in barn yard mud. Oh stay your scorn for her flop eared form-Who are you to say what is the norm? If consenting species accept and trust-Can modern man denounce this lust? We need no words, between us to mutter-The milk of kindness flows from the udder. And thus is sustained our tranquil bliss-Midst all the funky stenchiness.. After years of aversion I'm ready to bid-Yes a father to be, I'm ready for a kid.

John Holt

Ode To A Once-Beautiful Adam

You were only a statue, after all. When your plywood pedestal collapsed You fell apart. The Metropolitan Museum Now apologizes to Tullio Lombardo, The sculptor who is, of course, Conveniently dead. When I, a mere Volunteer there, walked through The sculpture court, I enjoyed your naked, perfect body, An unattainable ideal. Even your perfectly formed cock and balls. Are these latter why you fell off your pedestal Or, more correctly, it falled you? When I was still "wiggged out" from brain surgery I loved to contemplate your perfect body I never could touch, But need neither mourn nor feel rejected by. Artistic perfection misleads us If we look for it in living men. So I both miss you and don't. The museum is going to try To put you back together again. It may take four months. My recovery took over four years. I emerged from it fat and middleaged. But I wouldn't trade breathing living For being a perfect statue. Look at what happened to your Immortality, after all-- Demolished (only temporarily, I hope) by the failure of An anonymous piece of wood. From now on I'll look at Sculptures of real men and women, Like Rodin's fat, naked, middle-aged Balzac. I hope real people can be satisfied With real, imperfect lovers And not be permanently deceived By gods, angels, or ideals In stone like you.

Tom Savage 10/11/02

HOW CAN I BE HAPPY

How can I be happy if people are killing people all over the place? How can I sit in the SUN & drink my margrigetta if Palestinians are being driven over by tanks How can I give you my phone # if Israel bus is being bombed if Iraq is burning if Twin Towers is EXPLODING if stones/ if rubber bullets if Weapons of Mass Destruction are flying all around? How can I make a pass in peace if a Columbian Mother is Shot in the head as she makes breakfast? I really cant go through with my vacation plans when some asshole is YELLING ..... he is going to...NUKE EVERYONE

Rick Librizzi

WHISPERS

Talking in motions bring about deeply seated emotions that have been seated at the back of this crazy ride for too long that their legs have fallen asleep but my veins still want morphine..the past leaves the worst track marks..i am sorry...

sincerely too the only woman in a world of children, samhaine..2/03

Invisible

"How I Became One of the Invisible," really good read of David Rattray WE already are invisible, knowing that what we are can't be seen, even by oneself, can't be but 'sensed' that hard kernel of obscurity, not silence but the 'inexpressible' D.R. who ends his book mentioning he's got AIDS ... Attack the reader, why not? All books anyway are from behind the tomb They don't need the writer, Who doesn't need them

When contemplating one's own mortality What consolation can there be in logic? Artaud had by far the best of it there Who never admitted or even acted like he was there in the first place In any usual sense of the word (he confused himself with Shut) Death is like Love in the sense that it doesn't like to be observed, it can't be observed: what you're seeing is not it. Especially when it's you on you to see oneself outside always some self-mutilation in that So... never try to know yourself too well...! Artaud reached the point Sankara talked of - the understanding of a fundamental disconnection with all existence: you have not really a body, mind, parents, friends, family, works & so forth This is the kind of void he speaks to us across

For me, my curse is that there can never be enough, my only rest can be fatigue, I carry on always further, even when I go backwards, I see it as novel, from another way - My 'home' is in the measureless I am only at peace in the numberless (try quantifying a kind regard!) I am only happy in infinity While to imagine the Gods makes me delirious.

-Philip Beitchman

Before Criss Angel Frees Himself Tuesday, August 27, 2002, 8:23 a.m.

The 30-something man submerged head first then rights him self for 24 hours in a telephone booth-like water tank wants to know

How long can you hold your breath?

At 8:23 I begin to breathe less deep: the 6-foot man with wrinkled feet & hands blown up like Frankenstein's monster's will be alive or dying in 9 minutes (he went down the day before at 8:31 a.m. and

today at the same time his skin-ny air tube will be yanked from his tenacious mouth).

The week before blacked out in his mother's neighbor's Long Island pool the darkness must have been beautiful.

Marj Hahn 8/31/02

Glancing Back

Before the last conversation I'd stare at your sun-drenched face on the ride back from Rhode Island weekends, the cleft in your chin reminiscent of the famous Douglas family's, laugh lines decorating eye corners like bookends, brow lines furrowed like fields we'd pass.

After the last conversation, you exited my front door, glanced back, mouth a goodbye slit, face become marble - lines stretched tight like sheets finished with hospital corners I never could get right, no matter how many times you showed me.

Madeline Artenberg

NECKLACE

At the end of everyone Who worked on the horizon in Ceramic silence like apples Something you said Flicks into my path From a doorway. More smoke palmed from one Syllable to the next Of hollow credits at An unsatisfactory conclusion. Folks will have their last Word. Still Your double strand of eyes remains Ne plus ultra.

Jonathan Rapp