

Memoir

I started out in a D.C. winter, achy for the sun.
I came from a line of fast talkers,
bearded men arguing with God,
women damping their children's fire
when the Cossacks rode.

I was afraid of backfires, Crazy Pete Vanoni,
stomach aches, unwashed fruit,
kindness with a price.

I grew into a man perfecting invisibility,
collaging the world in order to please.
Husky for Purpose, I reached
for what couldn't be possessed,
held it up as some standard for arrival,
and then reached for story, heavy women in Vacaville,
biscottis, knobby gear shifts on Highway One.

I licked vulnerability up the middle,
twaddled it, loved it, cajoled it,
like a huckster in a carny show.
My favorite word was *motherfucker*.
If you deconstruct me far enough

I'll start to glow.
I sat with Ronnie dying in Tarzana Hospital,
tube down his nose like a stem in a flower,
shoulders shrunken like ripe fruit left in the sun,
something insistent calling to him
time to let go.

I made songs out of my tumbling mind's digressions,
waited till waiting was all I was
and was written on my skin, the way it dried,
the marks that blossomed on it.

I ate fish oil, garlic, bananas, tomatoes,
and nothing changed.

I became a dreaming man
forgetting why he entered rooms.
I forgot the names of my teachers,
my favorite pajamas, the meaning
of the continental shapes of the
ink stains on my pants.
Sometimes in a room, I'd remember

I'd say Listen... the sun's only got
20 more revolutions around the center
of the Milky Way before it grows huge,
swallows up the inner planets and then
shrinks to the size of a dot.
So what if one revolution takes 225, 000, 000 years,
so what if your hair's falling out,
your checkbook is shaky,
you've forgotten your song.
The sun's out touching kelp beds,
old men's shoes,
fire ants moving up the tree.chro



Stewart Mintzer

Stewart Mintzer lives in Los Angeles and is moving north at glacial speed. His poems have appeared in various publications in print and online. He has worked as a lawyer in the public defenders office, loves the redwoods and the sea, and is presently at work on the 'Permission Slip Project.'