

DREAM ROOMS

RIVER HALEN

ESSAIS SERIES NO. 15

**Book*hug Press
Toronto 2022**



FIRST EDITION

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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: Dream rooms / River Halen.

Names: Halen, River, author.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20220218935 | Canadiana (ebook) 2022021896X

ISBN 9781771667784 (softcover)

ISBN 9781771667791 (EPUB)

ISBN 9781771667807 (PDF)

Subjects: LCGFT: Essays. | LCGFT: Poetry. | LCGFT: Creative nonfiction.

Classification: LCC PS8615.A387 D74 2022 | DDC C814/.6—dc23

The production of this book was made possible through the generous assistance of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. Book*hug Press also acknowledges the support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund and the Government of Ontario through the Ontario Book Publishing Tax Credit and the Ontario Book Fund.



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The field was commotional: it did not allow stasis. To enter it, you had to be in motion, and to see where you were you had to be in motion, and not just moving your body around constantly, frantically naming stations, then moving at varying speeds between them, but also naming with impermanence, seeing objects as in the middle of some process, and understanding your seeing as impermanent as well...

—Renee Gladman, *Calamities*

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SELF LOVE

I don't know if I was given
James Herriot books to read as a child
because I wanted to be a veterinarian
or if I wanted to be a veterinarian
because I was given James Herriot books
to read as a child. Each day at work
in all the books, James Herriot, a veterinarian
put his hand inside a cow's cunt
and then later I tried this in the tub.
It hurt but I didn't stop.
There were no women in my childhood
in books or real life
just men and cows—
the women I loved were all men
and the women I didn't, cows.
No women in this exploration, either
just a man and a cow
and I was both—I did not know
how profoundly—this hurt
sometimes I got curious
asked a strange man for a ride—
I mean my mom, of course—
to a farm with real livestock
I could interview, waving fistfuls of
young grass and clover through the fence
to soften the electric fact.
Sometimes a cow slipped
a key in the ignition
and drove me there
like heroines herded
through the Victorian era
to fall in love or maybe
into a profession.

SOME ANIMALS AND THEIR HOUSING SITUATIONS

Nov. 30, in the year the St. Helena Giant Earwig was declared extinct

I had expected the bunny to be enormous, but it turned out to be only the regular size. I had confused the kind it was—Holland Lop—for another kind—Flemish—when I was googling, I guess because Holland and Belgium are so close together, if you are thinking about distance from a certain perspective, as a rabbit probably wouldn't.

Flemish rabbits, also known as Flemish Giants, are the size of sheepdogs, fat children, but taller, longer when stretched out, and I imagined the bunny would lie next to me in bed like a softer, sweatless, riskier version of my ex, with a heart rate up to 325 beats per minute.

Dec. 7

The bunny's name is Frog.

For a week he hopped around the pale green apartment, demolishing lettuces in a beautiful, systematic way, and I watched him as an example of how to live. He was perfect at it. A glad little equation.

But today he stopped. First hopping, then eating. Now he no longer poos his gemlike droppings. Drool mats the fur along his jaw and throat, and makes a dark trail down to his shoulder.

I should clarify that Frog is not my bunny. What's mine are two sweaters, four T-shirts, a sports bra, eight pairs of slightly stretched-out underwear, a pair of jeans, a pair of too-tight beige cotton-polyester blend pants that I have not yet realized make me look naked from the waist down when I am seen from a distance, a raincoat, a stickey zip-up fleece jacket, black socks with holes in the toes, my favourite red woolly socks, and spongy white athletic socks with dirty bottoms.

Four rechargeable batteries and a charger and a dirty laptop and a vibrator and a charger and an ancient orange flip phone and a charger and a small electric blanket you don't charge just plug in for instant romance.

A vial of concealer and small squirt bottles of soap and shampoo and two tinted lip balms and some books and receipts and new and previously chewed gum and a rust-coloured reusable menstrual cup and a papier-mâché necklace I dropped in the toilet once and an empty, fraying black suitcase on wheels.

I had some money, too, but I spent it—almost all of it—on fixing up my ex's house, for reasons I guess could best be described as cultural.