

David and Bathsheba

Michael R. Collings

When I slid the damask
from its plastic sleeve
to spread it on the table,
the stain throbbed against crisp white.

I ran to soak the cloth,
to wash, to bleach
until again the damask
hung white to the sun.
I fingered linen threads
and found no stain.

But when the cloth dried,
to ease a wrinkle I tugged a corner
taut,
and shuddered
as fibers sheared where the stain,
the bleach that made them white again,
had damaged fragile strands.

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