

Box Set

by John Olson

I live in a box. I think I'm a shoe. Though I may be a pen. I don't know. Identity is hard. Hard to figure out what one is. What one might be. May be. Easy to laugh, though. And cry. Crying and laughing. That would argue against my being a shoe. Shoes don't laugh, or cry. Nor do pens. Or do they? Writing is a form of weeping. Tears from the tip of the pen form images, stars, moons, the interior of a planetarium, that broad sweep of stars above one's head as someone stands at a podium identifying the constellations, Andromeda, Draco, Cassiopeia, Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, and so on, the infinite of the infinite, which cannot be imagined, particularly if you live in a box. My box is located on the border of time. There is also a lake and an alpine village and a hardware store where you can find light switches, pliers, hammers, glue, everything one needs to repair things, everything, that is, except what goes on inside one's being. What is it that repairs Being? Being with a capital B. Being. Pure Being. Being in a box. Being in a circle. Being in a pickle. Grammar isn't being. Grammar is a form of wardrobe. It is how we dress our thoughts. Our thoughts of Being.

Did I mention the ant? I have an inflatable ant. It decorates a corner. The furniture is high density foam and kiln-dried hardwood. Brass studs, paisley prints. I have a philosophy of furniture and it is this: furniture should thrill consciousness. I believe that there should be a separate form corresponding to every predicate and separate forms for hair, mud, and dirt. I believe that a table should differ from bees and that a bed is essential for sleep. Apart from that, furniture should just be furniture, and provide comfort for our aching bones.

I keep several brooms in the closet, one for the porch, one for the floor.

I also have a vacuum. It plugs into the wall. It makes a sound like humming, but it is not humming, it is something else. It is the whir

of a vacuum as it might sound if it were written in words on paper. A swarm of words congealing to make a vacuum.

A light veil keeps the mosquitoes out.

Silverware jingles in a drawer by the refrigerator.

When I open the door and step into the world, I feel the spin of the planet in our ride around the sun. The planet wobbles and creates seasons. Right now the season is approaching that of winter. There is the tincture of snow in the air, just a suggestion, a whisper, a proposal, an intimation. The wind stirs in dry old leaves. If you pick one up you can feel how dry and crinkly it is. The life has gone out of it. The sun has gone out of it. What is left is a dry parchment. What is left is a chapter from the story of a tree.

Puddles indicate the passage of a storm during the night. Signs of distress litter the ground. Branches, some of them fairly large, lie strewn on the ground.

Isn't it funny how a mosaic of neurons in our heads receives sensations from the outer world and grows into postulates and letters? Toads, eggs, claws. Umbrellas, apparitions, forests. A cat walking across a keyboard. A paragraph presented in the form of a box. A leaf. A being. A power stirring in the air.

