

Caliban's Dream

by John Olson

Today I'm feeling crabby and haggard and technology makes it easy to get to the point. Premonitions climb into my mind and glue words to my enzymes. Does that sound crazy? Of course it does. Totally fucking nuts. But what can I say? Have you ever read Barbara Guest? Or Shakespeare? Hobbes, Hume, Locke? I'm going to Mars. Fuck this planet. I'm out of here baby. I want a house on Mars where the little hairs on the arm can feel the hot wind of a barren landscape. Where the bizarre can bear the misanthropic larder of my logarithmic agonies. Where I can multiply the phosphor behind the eyes and sigh into miracles of depth. I'm fed up with my habits. I want new habits. Martian habits. Otherworldly habits. The embrace of oblivion the energy of words climbing out of their definitions and dancing in ablution. In exaltations of wildcat glitter. The candy of abstraction is such that a mint can provide the mouth with a blade of flavor. A drop of blood on the end of a charming knife. Side effects may include fidgeting, sandstone, and texture. I am turning magician. I am turning steam and steel. I can flip a color into talk. I can fiddle a contingency into convulsive salvation. I will out-Prospero Prospero. I will seek providence in spit, spirit in clouds of dust. Words will ride my emotions into ghostly pronouns of disfigured remembrance. I will bring with me the resilience of fish, the sterling apparitions of gaslight fog, sandwiches put together on quiet afternoons with alligator meat and the crisp lettuce of dissonance. I will do it with smoke and mirrors. This stuff called language. This stuff called consciousness. No one can chain consciousness. Consciousness is a ghostly condition: a rumor of waves. I call it a curse. I call it a formula. I call it a reticulum and a paradox. I call it polyglot. There are private excitements that sing in us their clumsy melodies and bring an incandescent clarity to the flowers of the mind. I am a monster on earth but on Mars I will be natural as rock. I will feel what I want to feel and not feel ashamed. Here on earth I am the thick mud of life's horrible sugar. I am the

vinegar of failure. I am punished by my appetites. I am bearded in bees and tortured by swamp mosquitoes. I am done with the trinkets of earth. I am done with the petty ambitions and daily monotonies of freeway hell. Why Mars? you ask. Why such a barren place? Because I want to be free of desire. I want the opposite of desire. I am gluttonous for dust. For a throat of granite. It is language alone that properly speaks, and it speaks in solitude. It comes to presence in its essential unfolding. It comes to radiance in its essential being. I was once outside of it looking in. But now that I have the trick of it, I will use it to walk outside into the light. And that will be my theme. The theme of Caliban's dream. How I used language to escape language. How I fed myself on nothingness. How I became desolate and yet full in my desolation. How I found infinite meanings in knots and spoons. How I turned delicate. How I, tormented and enchanted by unknown fevers, danced to a planet on a predicate.

