

Elevator to the Angels

by John Olson

I opened the closet door and there stood Eugène Ionesco lost among our clothes. I removed my coat and gave it to him and he kindly hung it up. Thank you, I said. Don't mention it, he said. He exited the closet and sneezed and remarked on the art of hanging clothes, how it is haunted by so many prospects, so many hooks, and lends a certain tartness to life, à la the humble martini olive. Precisely, I said. This is the daily ceremony I look forward to every day, that and the glory of continuing my life as a Buffalo Bill impersonator, while I employ the arabesques of words to incarnate the tangle of the mind, and set forth on the prairie in search of stethoscopes and quail. So you write then as well, he asked. I answered humbly that I did. When water is vertical it becomes a waterfall, he said. Yes, I've noticed the same phenomenon, I answered. But what happens when we fall through ourselves into sleep? We fall into other worlds, he said. And these worlds are sometimes our salvation. How so, I asked. It is in dreaming that our narratives turn brisk and ultramarine and that our authentic selves leap into postulations of light and buy tickets to Paris. I'm frequently impelled by shoes, I said. But in my dreams, my shoes behave badly. They become prepositions and I can feel their leather creak with strange, metaphysical maps, notions of up and down that lose their meaning entirely, and I can go anywhere I want, which frequently entails flying. The interior of my skull is seized by a shiny, Pythagorean lust, and I need a camel to get across the desert, away from the chains of my brain, which smell of algorithms and creosote. When this happens I awake feeling clever and unconstrained, and this might last for a full twenty minutes, or until I get dressed. Once I am encompassed in my clothes again, the dream dissolves in a pink cloud of divinity. I make breakfast and prepare for the fictions of the world, which require structure and concentration. The table causes itself to press up to my hands and the infinite camaraderie of furniture become fugues of prophecy. I hurry to write descriptions of

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the greenhouse and experiences of hope and percolation that thicken into invention and understanding. I looked to see what my interlocutor would have to say of this, but he had gone. I checked in the closet. He wasn't there. But sometime later as I prepared to go pick my wife up at work, an arm emerged from somewhere in the depths of the closet and handed me a soft, heavy coagulation of wool whose buttons of pearl and ivory smelled of accommodation, and whose sleeves accepted my arms like a meditation in silk. Thank you, I said. You're welcome, came a voice from within the dark. Remember: you're more than a coat, better than a shirt. Inside your clothes you're naked. And that, my friend, is an elevator to the angels.

