

Everything You've Got

by John Olson

Last night I dreamed I usurped a mighty king. Then I awoke and asked myself, what good does art do? This is a sadness. It is a sadness to think that art does nothing. It is like waking in a foreign bed and going into the city to seek a meaningful pattern. Not to mention money. And a means to live. I get dressed. I move a brush through my hair. I stand next to the stove with an egg in my hand. It feels cold. It has just been removed from the refrigerator. I tap it lightly with a butterknife and the shell breaks. I pry the shell open and a bright yellow blob of a yolk plops in the center hole of the bread I have made. There it begins to fry. And I imagine water going softly into the sky as it dries. Is it possible that thought and emotion can evaporate in a similar manner? Is it possible that a heavy feeling of despair can turn to vapor and rise and diffuse into nothing? Academic snobs don't like my brand of poetry. But why would they? They spent a lot of money to talk and write in a manner that nobody can understand. To belong to a priesthood of unemployment. Oh well. There is a grandeur in unprofitability. It cannot be denied. Sunlight oozes through the curtains of the window. My nerves respond to its coaxing. Come out, come out, it seems to say. I go out. The day is moist and metaphoric. I feel metaphors everywhere. I can't help it. Poets are aristocrats. We correspond to nothing but the migrations of birds and the music of stars. The sting of remorse is but a toothache of the spirit. Whatever happened to Seconal? Did it fall out of favor in the medical community? What about the musical community? I hear aberrations of crystal in the sound of the oboe. I check the mail. There is a flyer from a local grocery store and a letter from John Keats. I wish. I reach into my pocket for my keys and discover the cough drops I put there a week ago have melted. Now my fingers are sticky. And I don't have my keys. I can't get back in. I will wait for the neighbor. I will widen my perspective. Art takes everything you've got. It's totally possible to feel hunger for something that doesn't have material form. I write whatever I have

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at hand to write. If you look closely between the words you can see a wilderness. We all like to believe in worlds that have not yet been discovered. Is that because we have tired of this one? I always feel incongruous. I wrestle with myself daily. That person that inhabits my body. This body. This body sitting on the stoop. Human skin is alarmingly soft. Why is that? Why do we not have fur? Or scales? You need warm clothes to live in this world. Pain has a concentric shape. It is circular. It takes you round and round inside yourself looking for answers. This is the nature of pain. Revelation. And then I remember there is another key. It is under the flower pot on the porch. And I let myself in.

