

# Nowhere Is Everywhere

*by* John Olson

I got fired once because I couldn't make change. I knew this going in. Friends and family all pushed me to take a job behind the counter at a health food store. I kept insisting I couldn't make change. Seriously. My mind goes blank. If someone hands me a five dollar bill for an item that costs \$3.97 I do not know what to do. I panic. All I can think is what the other person must be thinking as the clerk to whom they just handed over their money stands vacant-eyed and paralyzed. And it is astonishing how impatient people can be in these situations. No one has a sense of humor about it. They freak. They go apoplectic with righteous indignation. This does not help one's calculations. The calculations that are as foreign to one's brain as Schopenhauer's thoughts on free will are to the average mollusk.

But I took the job. Don't worry, people said, it'll come to you. Just count backwards. Counting backwards, it seemed to me, complicated matters even worse. I went with the idea that somehow it would all become apparent to me when the time came. I started the job. I began by doing dishes, which I rather liked. But then the manager called me out to stand behind the counter and begin serving people. I poured someone a glass of wheatgrass and when they were finished and handed me their money I stood there, paralyzed. All I could do was stare back at the person who had handed me their money and wish I could finish out the rest of my biological existence as a convolution of muscle sandwiched between two shells. The manager took over and when the customer left, I was fired immediately. Here I discovered the immediate advantage of being a biped instead of a mollusk: legs.

There would be more jobs, more firings. I eventually found a job that lasted nineteen years running mail through a Pitney-Bowes machine eight hours a day. It allowed me to daydream. This, ultimately, is what my real talent in life would be. Daydreaming.

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Reverie. Staring into space. That's what my brain was trying to tell me all along. Stare, my friend, stare into space. You are an engineer of daydreams. A technician of the sacred. The sacred art of staring. The magic art of gazing. Looking nowhere, yet seeking everywhere.

