

Parable of the Parabola

by John Olson

I held the steam and scrubbed it. How do you do that? asked Willy. How do you scrub steam? It is so, you know, diaphanous. I said to Willy, because Willy was a good man and listened with both ears, we adapt to the heart's convulsions. I send my grammar to a public decipherment. It comes back as a dream. I am hirsute, Willy, and there are parts of my gut that have been forged in goldfish. What do you mean by that? asked Willy. It means that change is a tough and ornery lobster and once it gets you in its claws Maine will never be the same. I bowed my head and pulled a flood of words out of my arm. Afterwards, Will stood naked in a paragraph looking clean as a sunrise on stilts. I can hear the dead, Willy, the dead straining to get back into this life. If I write a few words down it seems to help them. They boil and box according to their destiny and inclination and the music of the spheres. You want a good parable in life, Willy, a guideline by which to measure your conduct. What's a parable? asked Willy. A parable is a large dish to catch the hollering and caterwaul of the stars. I think that's a parabolic dish, said Willy. Ok, Willy, let's call it a parabolic dish. A dish of splendor hoisted into the sky of our discontent. I want to hear the birth of the universe. I want to see its legs spread and the large head of being to emerge into the nothingness of space. Can you do that? asked Willy. Why sure you can. All you need is a little patience, a good shiny belt buckle, some sparks and spars and wrinkles and doors and you've got yourself a human diesel in dominatrix boots. You've got the equivalent of a fugue clanking around in the metals of love. You've got something tender and pliant and potentially pink. All it really is, all any of it is at any given time, is consciousness, that flywheel of the head creating sequence and existentialism. I don't think I want any of that, said Willy. Who does? The whole idea is to get rid of it. Or concentrate real hard on not noticing it. That I can do, said Willy. Ah but it's tricky, Willy, trickier than you think. Because as soon as you begin to concentrate on not noticing it, the whole shebang gets

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bigger, magnifies, and before you know it there you are, dripping with moonbeams. The stars come and throw their light over the world and the dead finally do, do get back in.

