

Rivers Start As Threads

by John Olson

Rivers start as threads

Of water in the mountains
Tumbling down in inexpressible purity
To become tea or coffee
Words are the residue
Of a long incubation
Let's talk about God
Fireworks in all the colors of the spectrum
The poet chisels the air
With the roar of a wildcat in an antique store
Pain is sometimes a diversion
Or a simple drink of water
I struggle every day against the embarrassment
Of the pump on my grandparent's farm
Eyeballs and olives and other beautiful spheres
Balance it out
With the taste of rain
The rivers of China
Are radical as ants
Even the lobster has a purpose
On a spectral farm with spectral cows
Drink the sky
Hoist a sentence on your tongue
A word emerging from the tip of a pen
A broken beer bottle in the street
A poem written in 1971
Teleological as the color yellow
Tendencies of deep affection bubble at the surface
Of a dime on the coffee table
An abalone gliding in a mountainous wave
Is the eye in the wind
Of a soul in a storm

Available online at *«<http://fictionaut.com/stories/john-olson/rivers-start-as-threads>»*

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Dissonance is indispensable
Observes Marcel Proust in a rowboat
I hold in my hand a fire
Forged in the pathos
Of cause and effect
Because the sky is crying
And poetry is a suitcase
Full of soothing walls
And a voice hanging in the air
Here for instance is a pair of pants
With belt buckle in the form of a swan
The curtain rises on a pair of lovers
And Erica Jong in an airplane
Jotting everything down
Fondling the vapor
Of the human breast
In a motel room in Omaha
All the rivers are nerves
Of light flaming into space

