

Tarzan on Mars

by John Olson

Tarzan peers through a telescope. Earth, in its aphelion, is approximately 40 million miles away.

A star.

He lives alone. He is old. He worries about going blind.

Mars is cold. But there are ways to keep warm. He reads poetry. He lets out bloodcurdling yells. He pounds his drums in a fury of savage release.

He swims in a subterranean pool. Its name is Maldoror. Names give intimacy. What a beautiful mind it must take to invent something like water.

He rests his head on a pillow. His mind rides a whirlwind of words. Needles of comparison sew subtleties of nail and epitome. He remembers Paris, and Portugal, and the Cote d'Ivoire.

A present participle crawls across the floor of his mind looking for a sentence.

I do not believe in a soul that is separate from the body, he muses, but if this proves to be the case, no one will be more surprised than me to find it floating around when my body is gone.

Morning arrives. The horizon is a luminous silk. Pterodactyls wheel in the sky.

Tarzan gets up and pounds his chest and lets out a blood curdling yell.

He remembers warm female skin on a long lazy Sunday. Light holds the hem of heaven. He sees all the birds of South America. Space and time mingled in a delicate pastel. The sun goes up and its brightness splits his headache.

He rolls up his sleeping bag, tucks his shirt in and thumbs a ride to the Church of the Redeemed of Redding, California food bank in a '67 Mercury Comet with a Cyclone hood and glass bumpers. Mars, in its aphelion, is approximately 40 million miles away.

A star.

Where ya from, asks the driver. Mars, answers Tarzan. Wow, says the driver. You're a long way from home. 40 million miles, says Tarzan. But who's counting?

