

What's Cool about Getting Old

by John Olson

What's cool about getting old are all the wrinkles. My skin tells a story of pain and labor. It's better than a tattoo and cheaper. I get lost among the memories. I smell Plato. I submerge myself in the past and form a fist and take a swing at the ghosts. The ghosts retreat and I laugh. Suckers! Here on earth you have a skull of sugar. The brain is porridge. But the closet doors and mammals are real. Fur is real. Odor is fleeting, but real. Fleeting is real. Floating is real. Because when you get to the twilight of your life brother death starts looking kind of good. And shitty. Shitty and good at once. Because when you get old contradictions grow headier. They make you giddy. They can't be solved. They're koans. They lead you to Catholicism and Zen. Brown paintings by Rembrandt. Big rocks in the void at the tippy top of the mountains. If language hadn't been invented what else would you call a redemption? A perception? The sound of a distant bell over the hills of France? Existence expands in the eyes and ears and the older one grows the younger one feels. My life hangs like a rag from the kitchen sink. And you know what? Most propositions are vertical. How many sounds swarm with desire? It's not the kind of music you can anticipate hearing in a shopping mall while riding the escalator up but if you gaze long enough at the person next to you certain truths will make themselves apparent. Dilations of consciousness stir in the most unexpected places. Sometimes it's a dimly lit bar and sometimes it's a bar of soap in a brightly lit bathroom. But these aren't the things that bring age and weariness into your bones. We all know what that is. It's time. It gets on your hands and puts little red spots there. It sags under the eyes. It deepens the furrows of the brow. It aches in muscle and bone. And when the totems in the fog chatter their strange geometry of whales and bears you can hear it: that

postulation of the morning lifting itself from the grass after a long night tossing and turning. Those ghosts amid a stand of birch. A memory delicate as calculus crawling through the brain. The fertility of experience manifesting itself as a twinkle in the eye. Whipped cream in a red mug. Delectations of long age shattered by an instant shuffle with a newspaper in one hand and a rag in the other. This is why I like words in strings. When getting old gets old there's a boat at the end of the dock to take you to the other side of the river and a trace of Paris in the air.

