

Brains

by Michael Seidel

The basement smells like the brick walls are trying to make a point about the neglect the darkness has inflicted upon it. Watery bread. Calcium sweat. I'm bringing my brain out of its hiding place again, on a shelf filled with chemicals and cleaners and the like. I had a jar for it once, but now it just rests on a plate that once caught water for a geranium. Sometimes in the morning, I reach out to my bedside table, feeling in the dark for my brain, like I did in days past, like it was a pair of glasses I couldn't see without. I feel I've gotten smarter though, keeping the brain downstairs where it's pickling in must and dust. My memory is like tracks in the snow. My memory is cookie dough. My memory is dirty tube socks. It's amazing, the process of figuring out how to install one's brain when one has no brain. One must rely on the hiccuping memory of muscles. I find my way down the stairs unaided. The dark at this point is a non-issue because there's no way my senses can communicate their confusion. Once in a while I trip up the movements and instal a jar of furniture polish or rust remover or a paint brush into where my brain should pulse. Oh but it's ok and quite entertaining for a while, to experience what it's like when your plug my entire being into a can of drywall spackling or a spray bottle of Lime-A-Way.

We've all made mistakes. My wife will find me in a hour or so huddled against the hot water heater with explosives inside my skull, the cat purring on my chest for the heat. My mistake was marrying someone who will just let me sleep while she goes upstairs to close the curtains, stopping the neighbors from looking in on our shame.

