

Queen Jane Redux

by John Olson

I'm invisible. I float through conversations sparkling and esoteric. I am on the periphery, always. The periphery is where margins of darkness are etched in the blood like skeins of delicate abstraction, where life is fringed with vast, unfathomable tempests, and one is at home in shadows, bathing in afterglow and purifying the crude wax of the honeybee. The periphery weighs less than the wing of a dragonfly. I watch as the local politicians put a dead idea in a burlap sack and the sky weeps and I erupt into moss because I am a wall of stone and dead ideas look like squids that have washed ashore and the sprawl of their tentacles and foul bloated bodies and dead jelly eyes invoke the hollow communion of rule and putrefaction. It is the kind of depravity that fuels the cynicism of the boardroom and predations of joyless men. Trees are different. Trees argue with the wind. Trees fidget and toss finding the sky boiling in their leaves. Water crawls into being as scarabs and frogs and I rejoin the herd of mankind growing antlers whose syntax incubates moonlight. I eat Chinese roots and blush to see reality walk on bones. Look: the grammar of steam absolves the ceiling of the monstrosity of birth. The tarantula, meanwhile, delights in solitude. This sentence once harbored a laugh but it burned into ash. All that was left was the sound of boots crunching in the snow. If you haven't already guessed, I live in a library. I celebrate the improbability of molasses. I watch people read. Those who read books are totally immersed. Those who read electronic gadgets are outside themselves. Poetry walks on tiptoe. The door misquotes its hinges. Fingers dance on shrines to digital gods. It is all so vain and vapid. The laptop has ruined the sanctity of the library. And so I get up and go see Queen Jane. If you've been wondering where these words might be headed they're headed toward Queen Jane. Queen Jane sits on a sofa sewing syllables into frost and romance. Her needles are icicles. Her threads are dreams. Don't be frightened by my wealth, she says. I'm not, I tell her. You can drop your pretense, she responds. And so I

do. And I stand there naked, trembling and real and out of the periphery and into the light.

