

Tonight I Am The Zipper

by John Olson

I am an old man. I didn't think it would happen but it happened. I got old and fell out of the wind. Every day now I go by store windows gazing at mannequins and hats. Sometimes when the glass is dark I see the reflection of an old man looking back at me and wonder who it is. Nature is perverse. One day the world's largest paragraph ballooned into a universe and exploded. Neutrinos splattered the walls. Billions of years later here I am going home. One man among billions going home with that age old question in his skull: who am I? How did I get this way? I hear the woman upstairs taking a shower. It's a good sound, water. A good feeling. Like fresh linen. My favorite thing to do is to crawl into bed. Tonight I am The Zipper. I am unzipping myself into sleep. Where all things good and sweet drift by in a lullaby of unzipped splendor. And yet I worry. Whatever happened to Obama's promises? And justice and dignity and basic human rights? And my copy of Ponge? I think I left Francis Ponge at the hair salon. It was a raggedy book. The pages were loose. That's why I carried it with me in the pocket of my coat. If I lost it I wouldn't care. But then I lost it and now I care. It was called Pieces. Ironic. I wish I did not have this feeling. I wish I could feel what I want to feel instead of feeling what I don't want to feel. Regret. Remorse. There are so many good things to feel. An immense river howling around the corner of a dream. The concentric sulk of the goldfish. Kerouac's loud broken poems. The Beatles' *Revolver* playing in a Cupertino garage in August, 1966, over a full glass of wine. The warmth of afternoon light diffusing into a room of cedar and pine. One often feels judged unfairly. It's so hard to get to know people these days. Even the social ones wall you out with politeness. Like jackknives with pearl handles in a display case. All shiny and sharp and folded into themselves. The bottom of the river expresses itself on the surface. Once you learn that everything becomes much more transparent. The splash of warm water on the face. The past is vast, and full of ghosts. Sooner or

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later one of us must know I really did try to get close to you. There is no point in space for these kinds of arguments. The ones that go on in the head. I wonder if Noam Chomsky ever danced to Buddy Holly in the basement. His voice is so weary now. Though the erudition remains. Endures. Like railroad ties soaked in creosote. Way down in old Mexico. Which is where I want to be. Up to my mouth in warm velvet water. Floating. Rounding a bend. Happy as an angel in the Rio Sonora sun.

