

# Breaking And Entering

*by* John Olson

Last night I broke into the Louvre. I was home, reading a magazine, when I suddenly felt an acute hunger for art. Do you know what it is to crave something? Of course you do. But this was different. This was beyond craving. There is no word for what I felt. My blood was electric. I was driven. I felt like a tiger trapped in the furious oils of Delacroix.

I am not a young man. I know what desire is. I have been driven by it a thousand times to say stupid things and do stupid things and finish an evening's revelry with the sting of remorse and the angst of dissolution. Multiply this by a hundred, by a thousand, and you will begin to get a glimmer of what drove me to break into the Louvre.

I discovered that breaking into the Louvre is easy. But there are alarms everywhere. Duh. It wasn't long before the police arrived.

They looked everywhere. But they did not know where to look. Police are unaccustomed with phenomena such as this. It is not in their training. And yet I was there. I was there the whole time.

You could see me in the Mona Lisa's smile. In the soft cerulean sky of Odilon Redon's *Le Char d'Apollon*. In the lush green trees of Titian's *The Pastoral Concert*. In the wings and golden halos of Giotto's *Lamentation*. In the candle flame and shadows of George de La Tour's *Saint Joseph The Carpenter*.

I'm the man in the top hat holding the rifle in Delacroix's *Liberty Leading The People*.

I'm the fur and jewels in Rembrandt's portrait of *Henrickje Stoffels with a Velvet Beret*. I'm the tenderness with which he

painted her. The bristles of the brush. The texture of the paint. The moment itself forever eluding the vicissitudes of time.

I'm *The Buffoon With A Lute*, *Pandemonium*, and *Boy With A Club Foot*.

I am the frill in Titian's *Man With The Glove*, the heavy black robe in *Eramus of Rotterdam*. In Louis Le Nain's *Peasant Family*, I am a spoon and a ladle and a cat on the floor. I am a beard and a wrinkle. I am the dirt and the folds of old, dingy clothing. I am the table. The chairs. The darkness, the weariness, the quiet dignity and resignation.

I am the boy playing the flute in the middle of the painting. The flute is so thin you can barely see it, barely see that amid this misery is a boy playing a flute. It is a wonder. This kid playing a flute among these sad, bitter people. No one appears to be listening. The old man at the table under his big floppy hat appears to have lost all hope. He takes what is given. He assumes nothing. His feet rest solidly on the ground.

When it was agreed that no one was in the museum and that something tripped the alarm the police left the museum and the it all turned quiet again. I dripped from the ceiling in beads of light and made my way home in the soft Paris night. Someone shouted: look! A tiger! And someone else, no, no it is just a boy with a club foot. And someone else, no, it is neither a boy nor a tiger, it is a fierce woman in a green dress crossing a barrier of debris and wounded men clutching a rifle and a flag. The top of her dress is undone and her magnificent breasts show us the voluptuous promise of the future. Follow that woman's breasts! She is leading the way to wholeness and liberty. And one old man opened his eyes in wonder and said, mon Dieu, c'est le Char d'Apollon! The Louvre has escaped!

