

Nocturnal Bypass

by John Olson

I tend to bump into things a lot. The bookcase between the bedroom and bathroom. The coffee table. The ghost of my father. The refrigerator and filing cabinet. I construct maps from whistles and distillations of fire escape shadows. I hear the night squeeze a window and extend itself into a worm and drift through the universe writing alphabets with its body and clutching planets with exhilarating dexterity. But then, where isn't it night? Isn't it always night in the universe? Cold black endless void. Never hug an image. Especially one of your own invention. Just jabber. Jabber away ploughing the air with your words and mouth dropping names and hints and insinuations. You might groan a little from time to time. It lends sincerity to your discourse. Crackle with inner fire. Clasp your friends and tell them you love them. Then skidoodle. The last thing you want is to get invited to their next poetry reading. Chat with a cat. Thicken yourself with occurrence and coughing. Smack your lips when you eat. Twitch and convulse when you drive then dig the expressions of your passengers. It will freak you out. Me I like to gnaw on deep philosophical subjects. Especially those that are related to conceptions of paradise. Sometimes I imagine pain as a landscape and I am in a hot air balloon drifting overhead and see its shadow on the ground. It looks like a giant round head. It moves over a hillock and distorts. I release more flame. The balloon rises. I reach for a cloud and fall out of the basket. As I fall to the ground I realize that in a few moments I will be experiencing a new kind of pain. The last pain. The last pain I will ever feel. And then I twitch and kick and awaken just before I hit the ground. And consciousness floods my head and my eyes open and there I am. A man in bed. No balloon. Thank god. I think. I'm not sure. That taste of oblivion was so near. So sweet. Such a tasty morsel of nothingness. An ache that follows at my heels throughout the day. Into the operating room. As I make incisions, and study the pumping of somebody's heart.

