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Jack Grapes: My Rodeo

Jack Grapes · Thursday, July 14th, 2011

*Jack Grapes is an award-winning poet, playwright, actor, teacher, and the editor and publisher of the long-running **ONTHEBUS**, one of the top literary journals in the country. This poem is from Jack Grapes's new book, **The Naked Eye**.*

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My Rodeo

I'm ashamed of my cheap rodeo,
so I keep it secret from my friends.
It's not even as big as theirs
and needs constant repair.
"How's your rodeo?" someone asks at a party.
"Fine!" they chirp up.
Everyone jumps at the chance
to extol the virtues of their rodeo.
Pretty soon a circle gathers
and everyone's discussing its size,
weather control, the acoustics, the peanuts.
If I stay in my corner someone will notice and ask about mine.
I don't want to talk about it.
So I join in, chirping up with you-don't says, and isn't-that-amazings, and what-about-the-functional-glitter?
By the time I get home
I'm exhausted from avoiding the subject of my rodeo.
I get home and there it is,
not much on weather control, lousy acoustics, styrofoam peanuts.
There's no sub-culture, no glitz-trimming, no contour illuminations, not even jacket hitch where the top bolt exceeds the maintenance quota lining.
I'm embarrassed and ashamed of the damn thing, give it a kick and stub my toe, then cover it with a sheet.
Maybe smother it.
I am a man who comes home depressed, lonely, frustrated, who tries to smother his rodeo, his cheap rodeo.
And I haven't even the courage to do that.

Imagine smothering one’s rodeo.
The shame would haunt me the rest of my life.
So after while, I take the sheet off and go to bed, hear its slight breathing throughout the night, its occasional cough, the short low moan just before daybreak. My cheap rodeo.

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