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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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