

## How to Unfeel the Dead

**Lance Olsen**

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These haunting, even shocking, stories linger in the mind with the power of the shower scene in Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Gathered over the span of Lance Olsen's career, and experimental in style, they run the gamut of odd characters and situations taken to the extreme: a couple's lovemaking turns to the amputation of body parts; the lobster is viewed as a work of art, a scientific specimen, and a menu item; Jackie Kennedy's mental state after the assassination of her husband leads to her developing sixteen different personas; a man's compulsion to care for his neighborhood leads to various disasters; studious attention to a Max Ernst painting becomes a series of hallucinatory experiences; and, a young girl becomes obsessed with kissing frogs to find the one that will turn into a prince. Olsen's virtuosity is apparent as he explores his characters, their mental states, and the ways their compulsions take over their minds and lives. In taking the opposite of the all-too-common numbed inattention to the extreme, Olsen has unleashed even more horrifying possibilities.

Lance Olsen is the author of more than twenty books and the recipient of Guggenheim and NEA fellowships as well as the Pushcart Prize and the Berlin Prize. He teaches innovative narrative theory and practice at the University of Utah.

KRISTINE MORRIS (Winter 2015)

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