

Student 049

Waterlogged Gospel

I believe in the stories spoken through the pint glass. The ones that come out muffled and slurred- truthful, real. A waterlogged gospel, sometimes they sink to the floor. Other times they surf through the air, caught in the wake of silence. They hang there till someone swivels. "I felt that, man," and the story's hit home. It's transferred, relocated, recycled, repurposed. Everything returns to normal and the pints, they just keep flowing.

I believe in the quick rhythm of door open, door close. The brushing of boots. The way the dishes stack up and the jawlines get loose. I play the taps like an organ, the liquid flow be my music. Each pitch a different gold, each sip closer to black. With the buzz of the machine another round to be poured, one step closer to forgetting. One step backwards, but who's counting. Not me, I live for those stories. The ones of deep saturation. Those that flow when the dam breaks- damn breaks, don't dare touch 'em. No last call, no final round, these lights only stay on when all others become dim. Pull the tap, release the golds, the ambers, the oranges, the yellows, just so long as it feeds these blues.

I believe people don't drink to be dirty, they drink to get clean. Clean of pain, clean of hopes, clean slate. Clean to be the man at the bar. Nothing more, not less, just existing where judgment goes to be alone. With every sip a layer runs clear, exposing the person underneath. Dan, the regular, he's front and center. His Boston accent is unearthed like stone under mud and Janie, she's explaining here new tattoo. Jim and Jess, they like that corner by the lamp, they're figuring out how to make it work while Christen just works to figure it out. Maybe the answer's hiding in the pint glass, don't look too hard.

I believe in peeling wallpaper and music too quiet and wrestling on one TV and PBS on the other. I believe in bar stools that squeak and dishes that clang and I believe that one guy left without paying. I believe Jim and Jess are going be just fine and people like Dan more when he's drunk. I believe Janie's tattoo is nothing but a black eye and I believe Christen just asked me for another.

I believe we're all sitting at a bar, our throats halfway down a pint glass. You have to forget you're speaking if you ever want to talk fast. I've met too many drunks and not enough drinkers, that is to say people you don't know what they're doing as opposed to those who do nothing for a reason. I'm preaching a waterlogged gospel. I believe it's different for anyone who listens. Listen, I believe in too many things for anything to be taken seriously, but I know one thing's for certain. We're all sitting at the dark end of a bar and nothing's more broken than someone drinking alone.