

Laundromats and Lounges

Roger Smith

there's a lounge in queens village called the pour house,
you'd be wise not to ask for a shot of prosperity.

i ordered a glass of hope,
topped off with bitter dreams
shot down by crooked cops
and sirens sang
from their stools.

put a quarter in the jukebox,
if u dare
listen,
the nine to five men
struggling to pay their bills,
the everyday house wife needing a sip of something
just to deal with her kids,
the middle class; classless,
suffering from summer's dry, thick, humidity,
bank accounts like mouths
thirsty.

the bartender's eyes are no more filled
with poverty than a newborn
her smile whispered
brightness that this merely part-time,
night-time oblivion
though day time academics couldn't have taught her anointed
head
and hands
to tap

dance beer mugs overflowing,
surely goodness and mercy
shall follow her, all the days
she communicates with consumers
of her art and craft,
she speaks eloquently
even through vodka induced, liver weakened
stress fractured ear drums.

in the air lingers the smell of fish-
net stockings chased with torn,
worn out latex mixed
in a familiar stench.

tomorrow's sorrow
holds hands with the infantile reality of today,
and springboards
into snifter
with aspirations of drowning in cognac.

the bar itself,
is a bloodstained, vomit infused cherrywood
with tips
plastered all over it.
dimesacks, nickelbags, copperheads
and tales of how not to end up here
in the back,
where pre-Magellan's flat
Earth lies;
with sticks, balls, holes;
traps
for uneducated balls to roll into,
moors to fall into,

into an abyss which hovers over
ground so close to home,
the familiarity
crowds the entrance;

blocks away
the exact same people
exit
a Laundromat,
carrying wet clothes, loads,

and pockets quarter filled with
quarters quarter
filled with lint
half empty but fully conscious
of clean, dirty and indifferent
they,

like the fabric
are survivors of the tsunami
they,

pour experiences into
wash, rinse and spin cycles
to increase the resistance of letting tears or sweat fade
origin of character
they,

cover frail feelings with rigid skin snuggled with fabric,
softener;
and this juxtapose is
just supposed to be ignored
but it's Wednesday,

drying clothes or buying a metrocard is a
decision left to ponder
two days before payday;

next round on me.