

drinking turpentine in paradise alley

by Thomas Hunt

"Another Cuba Libre, Gary."

Gary turned around and reached for the necessary bottles, his hands guided by instinct, his brain and body moving with the beat. But when he glanced over at the young man, his autopilot stalled. The youth was fading quickly, his eyes were swollen and his bags were packed with a lavender hue. As the bartender looked at him, the ice lay alone in the glass, silent, waiting.

"Are you sure about this Al? How about a nice coca-cola?"

"Another Cuba Libre, Gary."

"Alright Al." The autopilot sprung back to life. The rum splashed the ice and the coke followed. Like a ninja, Gary threw the lime up in the air and when it landed, he split it in two, then four. He dropped two pieces in the drink, two in a container behind the bar, and slid the drink down to Allen, who caught it and had a sip.

"That's on the house if you let me know what's troublin you."

Allen swirled the drink in the cup and had a long sip.

"If you care, I'll tell you. "

"Al, you look like shit. There's something wrong with you. I'm just trying to be your friend. So what's the deal?"

Allen nodded and took a deep breath, his body entering a state of deep meditation. He lay down his drink on the bar and the peace was broken as he spewed forth the contents of his troubled mind.

"Gary, you see i'm trying to write this poem, not just a poem, but an epic, a true truth about what's happening, what is going on around me and within me, what's happening in society, my friends, the world, the truth, the gut wrenching awful, righteous and honest, i just don't know where to start and i've been up for eight days, i think my mind's oozing out my ear, man, i just need a few more drinks, then the pencil, the paper, the madness."

Gary looked down at the bar. "Shit Al. You've got troubles I ain't never thought of, you enjoy that drink and try to get some sleep."

"Don't worry about me Gary." Allen slammed the rest of his drink and looked down to see what was left. Just a couple of pieces of lime and some ice. "I'll be fine man, after all, I've seen the best limes of my generation, destroyed."