

Sometimes, when the mood is just wrong,
I cannot sleep.
A cold anxiety washes over me.
Offering safe harbor to fears and inviting doubt,
And all of my insecurities laid bare.

I close my eyes
And darkness comes,
But not the dreams I so desperately need.
I lay awake,
Thinking the whole night has passed
Yet only a few minutes have ticked by.

My fingers drum against my headboard,
The sheep count me,
And the dogs howl.
My breathing slows and legs twitch
Blink,
Silence,
Blink,
Yet no relief.

I pace the room in my underwear,
Wanting to be anywhere but here and now,
In a different life, with a different body,
Someone who sleeps all through the night.
I would even trade places with my dog,
He sleeps just fine.

The house shifts.
There is a creak of wood.
The chill wind outside slips in.
The glass a dark portal
To a moonless night.

I stare at my hands, there is nothing better to do.
They have these deep blue veins and wrinkles
That I have never seen before,
New wrinkles that have just formed.
Only at night do I stare at my hands so.

The bed is warm and inviting,
I want to return
But it is more frustrating if I do, I know that
From experience.

I sit with my back against the wall,
It is chilled but will warm up.
I sit in the dark and wait for the dawn.
Only a few more hours to go.

Waiting
For morning.
Waiting and waiting.

Waiting.

“Insomnia”

By Gary H. Button

A boy in track pants
And a Cubs shirt
Clearly out of his mind
Danced on the sidewalk.

A bum in a plastic lounge chair
Next to a basket of clothes
Sang Pink Floyd
To a screen
And all the passersby.

The lights were up
On a Saturday night.
Flesh danced on the pole,
And the crisp rock blared.
Beer flowed in the halls
And tight skirts and fishnet stockings
Scoured the streets.

A loose alliance of nerds sat inside
Bright lights and tones reflected off glasses
They sang and played plastic instruments.
Huddled together alone.

The band was tired,
They had played earlier that day.
All of the speakers were turned up
Too high, too much
Everyone yelled to hear.

A fat man in an expensive sports coat,
Danced with a short Asian.
He moved good for a big guy,
Light on his feet.
The woman was more timid,
Not used to dancing in public.

A cute bartender cleaned the bar,
Washed the glasses,
Put the receipt in the drawer.
She smiled but it was plastic.
Painted on a for her shift.

So, the heart of the bar had moved.
The rain had forced management's hand.
Now, there was a gaping hole,
A reminder of a better time.

"San Jose"
By Gary H. Button

People are chaos,
They run into the room and declare things about themselves --
Something has happened to them
or will.

I was sitting alone and working.
A women ran in screeching something horrible.
My ears burned and turned red,
I touched them and they recoiled with pain.

The woman did not stop at my obvious discomfort,
instead her volume increased,
I could see the sadism in her eyes.
After she had gluttoned herself at my expense,
she skipped out of the room,
Light as a feather.

I had to go lay down, my head spun.
I frantically searched for a dustless glass
and a bottle of whiskey,
my hands shook.
The glass was the hard part of the equation
It hid from me for near eternity.
I almost gave up before it revealed itself,
peeking out from behind the broken microwave.

The burning calmed me down almost immediately. Something so familiar let me gather my bearings. It lifted something from my chest.

“Are you drinking again?”
My father ran in right on cue.
I hadn’t yet enjoyed the full sip,
All of the liquid had gone down
but the basking
was not quite there.

He yelled and ranted.
You lazy bum.
You have no job.

Your wife will leave you.

I had heard all of these things before,
They were also familiar.
I didn't say anything back, I stayed calm.
He waited for me to talk
That was the trap he set
But there was no biting this time.
He stormed out.

My wife came in afterwards talking about her day.
I couldn't quite hear her,
The words were all mashed together

and high pitched.
I kept eye contact and sipped the drink,
It was refreshing.

I wanted to close my eyes,
The black would be nicer than what was in front of me.
She would be angry if I kept my eyes closed too long,
The thought of me being somewhere else infuriated her.

I closed my eyes for a moment.
Then a moment longer.
The dark was good.

She moved quickly and bumped into me,
Spilling the glass to the ground and
Breaking it into a thousand pieces.
I looked down in disbelief,
She had a shocked face on,
But we both knew she did it on purpose.
It was an unspoken code.

That glass and silence were all I had
And now both of them were gone.
It is the end of the road for me.
Perhaps you can do better.

“Noise”
By Gary H. Button

The men meet eye to eye
And the women crowd all around
The fans scream out their lungs
While the gamblers lean far back
The light-weights shift to the back
The main event roars to life
All of the lights flash
The placard signals the start.

A bull moose stand up straight
His vision blurry and gloves laced up
Oil covers his bronze muscles
His feet shuffle across the mat.

In the great heartland of the West
On a proud steed of light
Lived alone the last gunslinger
Waiting for his time to strike.

Deep in the heart of France
He climbed to the very top
Making love to his only wife
Placing his flag on his conquests.

They stole his only boat
So he bundled together a raft
And hunted them day and night
With his two companions.

In the great heartland of the West
On a proud steed of light
Lived alone the last gunslinger
Waiting for his time to strike.

It is the courage in the hearts of men
Who have lived a thousand lives
Grit their teeth and shoulder the load
A tight grip on their reality.

It is both the pen and the sword
Needed to fight the broken machine
The only steps taken forward
Stand tall and ready your heart.

He aims with his eye
He shoots with his mind
He does not kill with his gun.

The quest is a tower far away
With invisible strings that pull
Follow the straight and narrow
His father's spirit by his side.

In the great heartland of the West

On a proud steed of light
Lived alone the last gunslinger
Waiting for his time to strike.

“The Last Gunslinger”
By Gary H. Button

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