

## Santa Fe

It was a scene in a movie  
or so it would seem.

The dingy dive bar barren except that one table  
where chaotic conversation could be heard sometimes,  
over the tired music playing in this place.

A cast of three, not counting me, as I was only walking in:  
The old pub philosopher dealing savage judgment  
against an unjust war to the middle age dart player  
with an easy smile and rich looking jacket  
flanked by the regular to his right, who was just watching.

It would have been more fair  
if I had come in carrying a camera, light-stand and soundman  
because then they'd know, they could see.  
Instead, they saw only me  
approaching innocently.

Of course I didn't come to write, just be friendly  
to the right handed regular Jaime, who'd invited me.  
But I kept my focus on Alfred, the pub philosopher  
he held the table with his talking, sneezing irregularly  
and always dribbling nose.  
Alfred liked cigarettes, napkins and double whiskeys  
also, the sympathetic barmaids who called him Alfie.  
From casual conversation, he noticed my speaking,  
called it pretty, pointed at me, "you should be a writer, really"  
I replied quietly; "poetry."

He could be mean, viciously yelling  
and berating the barmaids who bore it graciously  
and the next moment apologizing  
then joking and singing.  
Alfred was desperate to impress,  
he told me about a land deal  
down in Texas, a sweet piece  
a few acres and a fishing pond for \$45,000,  
"Pretty nice hunh?"

I told him it was probably an old gravel mine:  
Exhausted, empty, filled with river water,  
stocked with forgettable fish  
then sold piecemeal for home construction.  
America's idea of lake side property in the 21st century.  
He looked at me closely  
with old eyes squinting,  
thinking, finally agreeing; "Hey, that's pretty clever."

The night wore on and his composure wore thin  
the truth becoming the topic:  
"I should be retired but I still drive trucks"  
Why?  
"Cause then I won't drink. Let me tell ya, don't become an alcoholic."  
His sneezing grew worse  
explosive globs not always concealed  
by napkins.  
I lit a smoke quickly, feeling my throat tighten  
while he wiped and blew and bellowed.

Alfred wanted to move to America  
more than anything it seemed  
but lakeside gravel pits and the many  
scenes he had seen  
from his truck windows had smothered him  
making him cautious, uncertain.  
Desperately, drunkenly he was reduced to asking me.  
"Where should I go?"  
My answer was immediate: New Mexico  
"Aw no, that's a desert"  
I mean northern New Mexico, Santa Fe.  
*That* made him pause.  
He'd never thought of it before.  
I spoke with sub-conscious certainty  
a profound beer-foam prophecy  
"You should go to Santa Fe."

The talking and the smoking,  
the drinking and the thinking  
all of these things went on, then drew to a close

like the end of a documentary film, when we all went home.  
But I will always wonder;  
did he listen?  
Sure, he heard what I had to say  
but did Alfred really do it  
did he go to Santa Fe?

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