

# **CLOSING TIME**

JOHN WESTBROOK

I should like nothing more,  
Coming in from the rain  
To the tired café at the end  
Of the street of my life,  
Than to open the door  
To the roar of mirth warm  
In tall rafters, to the laughter  
Of hearth-light vamping  
A sprightly reel on the heels  
Of inconsequence, floating  
Like smoke on the wind  
Of my imminent leaving;  
Nothing more than to pick  
Up my piece of the rhythm  
And follow the line, holding  
Forth my cup fluent with  
Wine and the chorus of  
Evening, with the nape of  
My neck in the crooks of  
Beneficent elbows leading  
Me on to the mottling whirl  
Of the floor through which  
Your face from the depths  
Draws itself into focus;  
Nothing more than to move  
And be moved as I sift  
Through the crowd towards  
The back of the room to  
Greet and entreat and sit  
Next to you in that low-lit,

Quiet place—our almost-  
Impossibly—effortless human  
Embrace the thrill of my life—  
Till the night like the poem  
Of the space between our lips  
Comes smiling to a close.

## THE LOW-LYING COUNTRIES OF DRAGONS

For ten years running  
You've been beating me  
To Scotland, but I'll take  
The high road any day over  
Graying at the temples like  
Hera in eternal smolder.

Upon a time, my jawline  
Turned heads on a dime,  
I ate my heart out  
Of Swarovski bowls  
Quite unlike Ugolino,  
And rusty nails didn't bore me.

I thought mercy would come.  
I thought that above  
(If there were one)  
The saved wouldn't  
So much be singing  
As saved by song.

Maybe you'll find  
In the low-lying  
Countries of dragons  
Your damsel's hopeful

Braided rope of hair,  
But not in these.

From lesser towers I witness  
Aspirations fall like Icarus,  
Like alder leaves into the swift  
Potomac of my apathy,  
A not unfitting backdrop  
To our Heraclitean marriage ...

Last night I dreamt  
That I was young again  
And you were faithful.  
How waking changed us!  
Though into what  
I'm not entirely sure.