Forgotten Steps and Falling Snow

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It was mid-winter and night with soft large snow flakes lazily drifting down to the ground. Big and luminous in the light of the street lamp they settled atop parked cars and buried the footprints of a hundred forgotten steps.

“What'll it be bub?”

“Scotch and Soda.” Funny that he can’t remember what I drink. Every night I order the same thing, but he doesn’t remember, he doesn’t know anything but, ‘what’ll it be, bub?’

“Buy me a drink, honey.”

“What kind?”

“A scotch and soda would be nice.”

“Waiter, another scotch and soda.”

“You’re nice, ya know that.”

“I bought you a drink.”

“I know it. She took on a stupid, hurt look. I’ve been watching you lately. Every night you come in here and drink all by yourself.”

“I like it that way.”

“Where are your friends?”

“Some are married some are dead.”

“Dead?”

“There was a war.”

“Oh.”

They both took a drink.

Every night you try and forget, drinking yourself into a stupor and then some wide-eyed bitch tries to drag it back up again. Sometimes you’re successful and forget what you’re trying to forget, but it never lasts. Sometimes it’s a girl in a crowd that for an instant looks like her and your heart pounds and you begin thinking of that long happy time when she was yours and you knew it. But then the damn war came and almost from its beginning your dream of becoming something great and having your only love for your very own, began to die. It began to turn brown and curl up at the edges like a piece of white paper thrown on a fire and it didn’t take very long to burn.

“Why weren’t you killed?”

“I’ve got rotten luck.”

“You’re awfully bitter.”

“Yeah.”

But she was so damn beautiful and she understood you better than anybody ever had. They told you people never had trouble having babies anymore and you were five thousand miles away. And when you come back it was to two little bumps of dirt and a couple of pretty inscriptions that turned your stomach so that you never went back again.
"My name's Mabel, what's yours?"
"Harry."
Harry caught the waiter's eye and held up two fingers.
"Where do you get all your money, Harry?"
"Why?"
"I mean it costs money to drink like you do."
"I've got a rich uncle."
"Oh that's nice what's his name?"
"Sam."
"Gee, I've got an uncle named Sam, he's a contractor, you know builds houses. Ha ha."
"Mine's in government."
Harry finished his drink and ordered two more.
"Did you ever do anything before—"
"Before I started living off my uncle."
"I didn't mean to—"
"Yeah I used to be a writer before the war."
"What happened after the war?"
"I started drinking."
"Why?"
"I don't know," he said, "There's just nothing else."
"Don't you do anything, now?"
"I try damn hard to forget and you're not helping any." He had said it hard with an ugly twist to his face and it scared her.
"I'm sorry, Harry I . . . guess I . . . better go now."
It had stopped snowing when he stepped on to the street and everything was covered under a blanket of snow. He walked under the street lamp leaving a crooked trail of footsteps and disappeared into the great nothingness called night. It started snowing again.

Pour Attendre . . .

Sous la neige la douce fleur,
Sans danger ru froid de l'hiver,
Se blottit, comme fait mon coeur,
Contre la terre.

Avec allegresse, j'ai concu
Mon attente, finie toujours,
Cor printemps, pour moi, est venu
Avec Amour

. . . Diane Peacock