Stale

Kara Drebitko
St. John Fisher College

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In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"I slide a few more tired quarters into the jukebox coin slot and browse the rundown albums, swaying slightly. Grateful Dead: "Casey Jones." "Shakedown Street." I'll need a few more drinks."

**SPINNING**  
BY CHANNYN QUINN

she’s spinning  
smile plastered on her face  
cheeks pushed back by force  
smiling as the world  
rotates around her  
one color running into the next  
yellowredgreenblue  
spinning as  
shades of life  
blur into excitement and allusion  
not knowing what she’s gotten herself into  
this wild ride  
this wild life  
and she’s spinning.

**STALE**  
BY KARA DREBITKO

I slide a few more tired quarters into the jukebox coin slot and browse the rundown albums, swaying slightly. Grateful Dead: “Casey Jones.” “Shakedown Street.” I’ll need a few more drinks.  
Back to the comfort of the worn-out barstool, and here is my legacy.  
Leaning into the cracked wood, I grin at the bartender. “Hey, sweet cheeks. A few more of the same’ll do me.” I watch as she pours the whiskey, apathetic and bored. I wonder where her mind is: her boyfriend? her baby? Hell, maybe she’s a dyke.  
This idea gets me and I find myself chuckling into the liquor.  
I inspect the crude etchings that cover the bar. “Jill and Bobby, ’83.” A pot leaf. A phone number.  
“All right, darlin’, I’ll take another.” The warmth grows from the inside out. Inhibitions gone, I try to chat up the pretty thing.  
“Now, how would you like to meet for coffee sometime?” She keeps pouring, smiling, but doesn’t say a thing. She’s a real cutie.  
Well beyond the point of tasting, I down the next glass, and I can’t stop staring. Her hair is what gets me. That’s gotta be the nicest part about women. It’s like a black flag waving around their femininity.  
Depression starts to set in, and I know I should call it a night.  
“How ’bout one more?” This time I don’t even look at her. I’m fifty two and she’s Lolita. She’s twenty-four and I’m no one.  
I use the bar to lift myself up and I leave a nice tip. With heavy feet, I roll out the door and perform my favorite ritual. Pick up the pay phone. Dial. One ring. Wait. Two rings. Wait—  
“Hello, Jon.”  
“Evenin’, Sarah.”  
“I thought we agreed this wouldn’t happen anymore.”  
“Shit, I know. It was the bartender. Reminded me of you. Same hair and everything...”