

Reconnaissance

Written by:

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INT. JAZZ CLUB

It's poetry slam night. The PIANO PLAYER is tinkling along on a piano, providing a nice ambiance. People are getting on stage and performing their poetry, but it sounds muffled and jumbled. Only the piano can be heard clearly.

CAPTAIN and HANK are sitting at a round table. Their words are the only ones that can be understood. Captain sighs and takes Hank's hand.

CAPTAIN
(dramatically)
Hank. I-I need to confess something to you. I...

Captain removes his hand and drags it down his cheek slowly.

CAPTAIN
(normally)
I hate this place.

HANK
We've been here for five minutes. We haven't even ordered drinks yet.

CAPTAIN
Well, from my impressions of this place, the menu will be full of stupid girly drinks like, "Persephone's Kiss" or something.

HANK
Captain, I've seen you drink dollar store tequila straight from the bottle. You could actually treat your liver to something like "Persephone's Kiss" every once in a while.

CAPTAIN
I drank that tequila because it was the manly thing to do. Sure, my piss caught on fire when I tossed a cig butt on it, but it was cool knowing I could create fire like that.

HANK
You are a hazard to society.

CAPTAIN

I wouldn't have it any other way.

Captain and Hank go quiet. POET #1 gets on stage.

POET #1

(choppy and loud)

Infants
Half-starved in the winter,
The beginning of
Mental ailment.
We leave
Our education
With leisure,
Shall the world be confined
Forever?
Alas!
It is rich enough.
Thank politics,
For why should
Our life be, in any respect,
provincial?

Poet #1 half-bows half-curtseys awkwardly and leaves the stage. The crowd claps, and another poet gets on stage. The new performer's voice is muffled.

CAPTAIN

That literally meant nothing.

HANK

It doesn't have to mean something to you. Maybe it means something to them.

CAPTAIN

Well, it doesn't mean anything to me, so it is inherently worthless.

HANK

Well, I think you should just listen. You've been cooped up at that base for too long.

CAPTAIN

It's my job to be cooped up at that base.

HANK

Still. It could prove helpful for you to get out of the base more often.

CAPTAIN

I'm not on base. You're asking a lot from me when I'm doing all I can right now.

HANK

I know, it's just, you could use more exposure to decadent things other than the second half of "Titanic."

CAPTAIN

There are hundreds of on-screen killings. What more could you ask for?

Captain and Hank go quiet. POET #2 gets on stage.

POET #2

(slurred and edgy)

The wood creaks on the porch,
Standing at a house
That I barely remember.
The mat in front of the door,
Woven from rustic strings,
The corners frayed and curled.
Rivets of beaten-down planks,
Clawed at by droplets
Of streams made of rain.
The floors inside were polished,
The curtains replaced
And the walls painted anew.
Yet it still gave memories,
Mind-pictures,
The best kind of vivid.

Poet #2 leaves the stage. The crowd claps, and another poet gets on stage. The new performer's voice is muffled.

CAPTAIN

Literally what was that. Good job, you described a house. What d'you want, a kiss goodnight?

HANK

You are a very sad man. I honestly don't know where you're coming from.

CAPTAIN

I'm thinking about my soldiers. These kids just want attention.

HANK

It's just art, Captain.

POET #3 gets on stage. They're obviously nervous.

CAPTAIN

Hank, look at them. They just want something out of this, some sick satisfaction.

HANK

Just... listen.

Poet #3 clears their throat in the mic. Captain and Hank go quiet.

POET #3

(stuttering heavily)

One word, six letters.
Small, yet terrifying.
Parole.
To be shoved back
Into society,
Reformed and ready to go.
He's not reformed!
He's not ready to go!
Hooch wine and
Tallying the days
Are everyday life for him.
How could he give that up?
Murder in the moment,
My God, he's the serpent;
He will give his freedom
Once again, on the end
Of a bloody shiv.

Poet #3 rushes off the stage. The crowd claps, and another poet gets on stage. The new performer's voice is muffled. Captain clenches his hands and unclenches them.

HANK

What? Getting pissy without a drink?

CAPTAIN

Yes. Very obviously yes. That's what's bothering me right now.

HANK

Captain?

Hank sighs and takes Captain's hand. Captain doesn't let go.

HANK

It's just poetry. I didn't know that kinda shit would be here, but... we can go, if you want.

CAPTAIN

No. It's just... You said I needed to experience more deliberate things.

HANK

You mean decadent?

CAPTAIN

Yeah. That. Can we... stay for a few more?

END



Emilie Wilson's *Boots*