

A story in those eyes

By Glenn Currier

At the bar I drank a few cold beers
and saw him in the mirror on the wall
I caught his gaze and raised my mug with cheers
he forced a smile that had no cheer at all
I wondered if he'd also been through hell
I knew myself the times that I'd been bleak
and saw a story in those eyes to tell,
so I turned to him -- and he began to speak.

in nineteen ninety-two he went to war
a war he fought by day and lost at night
on streets of gold he buzzed from eight to four
he worked and won a fortune to excite.
But when the sun went down the fortune flew
it went to every tavern in the town
it drained away with every mug of brew.
The gains he made by day - by night came down.

In January of that fateful year
the woman that he loved - she left him lost
she died a death that drained his every tear
and every hope he had for love was lost:
every hope for baseball with a boy
for rooms that echoed screams of little girls
for Sundays out to church to sing with joy
for trips in summers all around the world.

He said he wondered if he'd even live
and how he missed her softness and her touch
he wept and said how much she had to give
and how he hated liquor for his crutch.
We talked for hours into early morn
I listened closely to the pain he shed
and to the grief and sadness that he'd borne.
I recognized the crooked path he tread.

And finally the bartender said to leave.
We packed our woes and left that sotted place.
We called a group that promised a reprieve,
we swore we'd try this other gathering space
and meet on Wednesday night the thirty first.
We found St. Ann's a room where others told
the stories of *their* weakness and *their* thirst
and learned to help each other to be whole.