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Men as Bars, Women as Hotels

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Men as Bars, Women as Hotels

Reginald Youngblood

UNF Writing Center Award for Poetry

Pops, it's more incriminating than a
fingerprint
when I can walk into any bar
and get a collective wink of recognition
from its patrons,
or a playful pat on my ass
from its waitress,
or if I am wordlessly given a usual
by its barkeep—
then I know:
I've stood where you've stood.

Such is the likeness we share,
that once, a blind man,
a seer, gave me the finger—
he thought I was you!

So, here I am, in a bar,
because it amuses me to hear
the nicknames you've accrued
during my childhood,
and it pleases me to nick
free drinks you've garnered
for things I have never done.
But one thing I have done.

Once, while sipping your usual,
our mutual friend, the barkeep,
handed me a note, written and signed
by a woman I didn't know,
and it read,
*These bruises etched upon my heart,
match the contours of your mouth.
You are the guilty one.*

It only took seven whiskey sours
to cajole the seer into helping —
And where did his drunken

divining lead me?

To this hotel room,
where I am sprawled on a double
thinking how I was not surprised
when the concierge wordlessly
handed me a key,
or when the bellhop
confidently led me to 5A,
or that there was a strange woman
who curled (like a fern) her body
around mine, and whispered
your name in my ear.