

# Dip My Pacifier in Whiskey

Mathias Nelson

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## My Old Man

My father liked to pretend gruff and hearty  
growing up on a farm with big hands,  
lean lanky muscles that turned into beefy limbs  
and a milk barrel waist.

The day you became weak, father,  
was when you were finally all grown up  
and decided to stay Christian because  
it's taught. The day you went hunting  
though the fridge was full of food  
and you cried over killing a beautiful deer  
because you just wanted to run with the pack.

The day a small bat flew in your hair  
and you drowned it in a milk jug, later  
bragging about its fate to children as if it were truly a vampire,  
as if you were truly a slayer  
and not just an impressionable rind  
stifling in the surrounding herd of the good farm fields  
not noticing the soil grow darker  
the more you dug the ordinary man.  
And still today you take me fishing  
and scrutinize me for not putting my hook  
deep in the fish's gullet  
for fun.

I sit in this boat now  
watching you bob with the river,  
waiting for the line to tug  
so you can simply say you stuck a fish  
only to throw it back  
and I wonder, is it the sun  
that turns your face so red  
or the reflection of autumn leaves  
falling about your softened head.

## Absorb

I thought of novels  
before I had the ability to write them  
but saw their scenes in my head  
like a movie theater made of bone,  
and though I may never write them  
the experience was beautiful,  
a show made just for me  
with my own private actors,  
where none of the blood  
was fake, where all the sex  
was real, where women and children  
died like men and lived forever  
in that moment just like now  
with the breeze  
bringing curtains to brush my cheeks,  
with the carpet  
orange as flames cushioning my feet,  
where I am alive  
poised forever  
over this keyboard,  
fingers striking the black keys  
then falling onto them  
to absorb their heat  
like a child's fevered temple.



## Sleeping with The

When hearing that your best friend has drowned  
the struggle enters your imagination  
like no other.  
It isn't like hearing of a random drowning  
on the ten o'clock news  
thinking *that's too bad*  
and dismissing it thirty seconds after. No,  
you picture your friend kicking, swinging  
fighting *water*.  
You even try to hold your breath  
until you gasp  
looking for air bubbles. You  
see catfish combing eyes, pulling lids shut.  
You see your friend puffed and flaking  
in the bottom of your coffee cup,  
in coffee the same color as the muddy river  
where they dump sewage;  
your friend's arms and legs spread, clothes and hair billowing,  
the body lightly bouncing every time your hand jerks.  
You take a tentative sip  
choke with the reality of it,  
of this real imagination,  
then retch your hot coffee into the fish tank  
only to pause  
with the steam rising off the water like some eerie mist  
to see a shoe sticking out of multicolored rocks  
before the suckerfish's black, yellow rimmed eyes  
gaze into yours.