

SOMEBODY

he had long thin arms,
sat always in a white t-shirt,
no gut at all, he was in his mid-40s,
cheeks staved in,
an x-con, he rolled a cigarette with one hand,
skin burned brown,
he had crazy gray eyebrows,
never looked right at you,
he had no luck with women,
was always in love with some number who disdained him,
he coughed too often,
talked about all his terrible jobs of the past,
sitting in a chair
he drank wine out of tall water glasses,
preferred port, said muscatel made him crazy.

each time we drank it was about the same,
he got into it:

"come on, Hank,
let's fight!
you've got guts,
let's fight!"

"I don't want to fight you,
Lou."

I wasn't afraid of him.
in fact, he bored me.

there wasn't anybody else to drink with in that hotel except a lady I knew down the hall.

"you banging her, Hank?"

"maybe."

"can you fix me up?"

"I don't think so."

"come on, Hank,
let's fight!"

"go on, drink your wine."

"I got in a fight with a guy once, we used pick handles.
he broke my arm on the first swing.
I still got him, I busted him up good."

he poured the wine down.
he always got sick.
he could seldom make it to the hall bathroom.
he'd let it go in my sink.

"all right, Lou,
clean up that fucking sink!"

"sorry, Hank,
sorry, I think I got an ulcer."

"clean the sink!"

he was like a 17 year old boy,
nothing had developed.
I preferred to drink alone
but I didn't want to hurt his feelings.

one time he didn't come around for a couple of nights.
that was all right but he owed me ten bucks and I needed money for wine.

I went down to his door and knocked.

no answer.

I pushed the door open. he was on the bed and his gas heater was hissing. it wasn't lit and all the windows were closed.

I shut the heater off, opened the windows and stood at the door swinging it back and forth to get air into the room.

then I shook him. he was still alive. he gave me a stupid smile.

"Hank, you saved my life! you saved my life!"

he got up in bed, put his feet on the floor.

"you saved my life! you're my buddy forever!"

"next time you want to

kill yourself, lock your door."

I walked out of there and back to my room.

then he was knocking on my door.

I told him to come in.

he sat in the chair.

"I'm in love," he said.

"yeah?"

"it's the manager. you ever notice her body, her eyes, her hair?" and she's intelligent."

"Lou, you owe me ten bucks."

"all I got is a five."

"let me have it."

he took a 5 from his wallet. that's all that was there.

I took it.

"I wrote her a long love letter, 4 pages long, I slipped it under her door."

"did you sign it?"

"no."

"don't worry about it."

"all right, Hank. but I think she knows it's me. I'm afraid to face her. you got any wine?"

"one bottle."

"can I have a drink?"

"I got the bottle and put the corkscrew to the cork.

Lou sat there and rolled a cigarette with one hand.