

spacecraftprojects

we are all astronauts

transmissions
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Dented Cans

In Bowling Green you drink your first Stag room temperature. Its froth won't dissolve in your mouth. It's an inglorious measure that makes men and reminds men. The color of apple juice. Darker. Sour. Sultry. And slow. When you get to the bottom, swirl the residue from the unwashed mug; can't wash it, loses flavor. And gulp it down. I know, it feels like wet sand and mustache hair. When the left over grain settles in your gums, run your tongue along your cheek and peer through the bottom of the mug and look for the room full of older men who brought Vietnamese wives back with them and how they peek around the corner before passing by the doorway, entering the room, leaving the room. Then slam the handled glass down and belch hard enough that you think you might vomit, but don't vomit, can't vomit. You're a man now. Hands missing fingers clasp the duck bills of their Boatmen's Bureau and Harbison-Walker hats and tip them forward off-rhythm. If you're really a man's man you'll head down the highway and turn on County Rd. A107 and challenge Cotton for some of his moonshine. It don't matter if you win, no one has. Will you make it back with your eyes working? If you're a man's man you'll get a job at the brick plant or work for Margret Jordan and come home smelling like clay and brimstone, sulfur. Or you'll join the military and never come home.

Chevy S-10

He looks like my grandpa, maybe he is someone's grandpa. I should stop staring and take my face off the window of his truck. Perhaps he's a fireman. Or his son is a fireman and his grandson that went into the A&P with him wants to be a fireman too. That's why there's a plastic hard hat and a toy Dalmatian in the truck cab. Or maybe his son died in a fire saving a woman whose house was burning because of grease. And her husband who has died always put out the fires she started when she cooked: "Now look, Yvonne, flour not water." But she forgot this time; she had been forgetting a lot of things for a while. The firefighter died saving her, but she's still in intensive care and maybe this old man that looks like my grandpa goes to visit her? Maybe he's a hunter and lives alone in a cabin on a hill near the edge of town--because the tall Christmas plaid thermos full of steaming black coffee. My grandpa liked black coffee. Maybe he's a Vietnam vet and he is shell shocked and it tore his family apart because he thought therapy was for sissies or maybe the hat belongs to his younger brother who always wanted to impress him, but was blown to smithereens days before his damp crumpled letter reached home.

"Hey yawl, I am doin' o.k.

There's lots of trees here.

Will be back

soon"

Maybe he left his keys in the ignition so he won't stay in the store too long and give a good excuse to avoid drawn out conversations. Maybe he doesn't like to talk about how it used to be. Maybe I should stop staring, take my face off his truck window.