Paradise Bar and Lounge

Wallace Vegors*
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Abstract

"A man shouldn’t cry like that.” “What man shouldn’t cry like what?” ”That one — there.”
”Him in the corner?” ”That’s him. The grey one.” ”Yeah, he is crying, isn’t he.” ”Yeah, he is.”
”Wonder why he’s crying?...
"A man shouldn't cry like that."
"What man shouldn't cry like what?"
"That one — there."
"Him in the corner?"
"That's him. The grey one."
"Yeah, he is crying, isn't he."
"Yeah, he is."
"Wonder why he's crying?"
"I dunno — you tell me."
"Funny why he's crying. A man shouldn't cry, on payday at least."
"No, a man shouldn't. Not on payday."
"Must be feeling low."
"Yeah, he must."
"Dear John maybe."
"Yeah, he got a Dear John."
"Just before he goes home."
"Yeah."
"Dear John can make a man cry."
"Hello — May I sit down?"
"Huh? Oh sure, have a chair."
"Yeah, join us."
"How are you?"
"Us? We're OK."
"We're always OK on payday."
"You give me cigarette — yes?"
"You want a cigarette?"
"What you want a cigarette for?"
"I smoke it."
"Here? Right now?"
"Sure — I smoke it now."
"And you want a drink too?"
"If you like me you buy me drink. Anh?"
"Do we like her?"
"I don't know — she hasn't done anything for us."
"No, she hasn't. Not one thing."
"We don't like her till she does — right?"
"That's right. She's gotta do something for us."
"Aah, GI no damn good."
"Naw — stick around. Sit down."
"Yeah, don't get sore."
"Look. See that man there. All you got to do is find out why he's crying."
"You nuts?"
"And you buy me drink?"
"And I buy you drink. OK?"
"OK. You buy me drink now, yes?"
"Go order it — but find out why."
"OK. I be back."
"Man, you gone ape?"
"No, I'm curious. He shouldn't cry on payday."
"Dear John."
"Naw — He's old army. And he'd be drunker."
"You're still ape. Peso seventy worth."
"So what? It's payday."
"Hey, she found out from Gloria and look at her walk."
"Yeah, that's nice all right."
"Nice ain't the word."
"Hi, you find out?"
"Yes. Gloria say it is baby."
"Baby?"
"You heard her — baby."
"Whose baby? His baby?"
"No. It is Alicia's baby. It is dead."
"Haw. A drink down the rathole."
"Was it his baby?"
"He not know. Maybe yes."
"Haw. I'll say he don't."
"He don't know and he's crying?"
"Yes."
"I'll be damned."
"Peso seventy shot."
"Thank you for the drink."
"Haw. Down a rathole."
"I bring more beer?"
"Yeah, he's buying."
"OK, I be back."
"Get yourself something too. He's rich today."
—Wallace Vegors, Ag. Jr.

LOS ANGELES

Within the knuckly, brown-earthed valley
Runs the concrete, sun-wavering oil-streaked concrete,
Angling from low mountains to the sea.
And under the pale-brown, acrid
Shroud the scurrying populace
Shuttles within its habited circuits
Unshaken by wondering tourists.
And at each dropping of the sun
Come the brightly-garbed employed,
Out of the airplane factories,
Glass-fronted stucco loan agencies,
The cool depths of Macy's,
And off the piers.
They come,
Moil past
The eucalyptus-shaded yellow mission,
Buick upon Dodge upon the highways,
Then dropping singly off
Onto silent shaded streets
Late-laid in the brown-earthed valley.
—Wayne Billings, Ex. '58