

# Lost Among the Consonants

*by Adam Strong*

I'm writing our initials in black sharpie on the tunnel wall. There's already people who have come before me, hundreds of pairs of Qs and As and hearts in the middle, through a small hole in the brick I can hear the French accents, spinning through, a reminder that I am not where I belong, a country whose language completely escapes me. So trying to speak French is for my tongue to get all swollen in my mouth, and they just look at me and think there's another American that isn't even trying. But down here, in this tunnel, with the Seine on the other side of me, with Paris and romance and young couples, all I can think of is the booze I will buy when I find a grocery store, the cheap champagne I will spray the walls of my hostel, the Belgian beer with the red gnome on it, the look on the woman's face when I pop the 2nd bottle of champagne, and let the cork sail out the of the skylight window into the courtyard below, the face that thinks there goes another American with a gun.

I'll put on Miami Vice in French. I will hook up brick-sized speakers to my Walkman. I will blast songs of heartbreak manifested by feedback and screaming. I will do all of this because you are not here with me because you know as much as I do, that I will not be here for you in the long run, I am a temporary man who will return to where he lives, a professional tourist.

Back in the tunnel again, only now I am drunk, with the spinning of the French accents even more underwater then before. I see what I wrote earlier, our initials, and even though I've written them only hours before, it's like once I've written them, they become permanent, they've always been there, and now I've written a different outcome for us, you and I here together, maybe another lifetime ago, maybe yesterday, maybe in a future that hasn't

happened yet, maybe you just left me, a drunken manifestation of a promise lost among the consonants.

