

My Father Teaches Me To Drink Straight Shots

by Ed Higgins

of Jim Beam when I was maybe fifteen. Or anyway old enough to admire the lesson. Since for years it seems I'd been watching as he'd uncap a bottle he'd pull from the under sink cupboard where he always kept a fifth or quart of JB just for this morning purpose. Down among a tangled undersea of arranged and strewn things: faded pink and yellow dried sponges, a white plastic Clorox bottle, a half-full orange and black Spic & Span, yellow-lettered Tide, green bottled up Mr. Clean, blue but partially rusted S.O.S. pads needing rescue themselves and other coral-bright near-empty or near-full containers of lost or forgotten cleaning supplies. So dad would stand with the cupboard door still open there on the brick pattern red linoleum in his boxer-shorts and white t-shirt wearing those stupid brown slippers everyone always buys their dad for some birthday or other or perhaps Christmas, or probably both, with money your mother really gives you. He'd stand there leaning one forearm against the stainless-steel sink and turn on the cold water tap letting it run slowly while he uncapped the JB and then took a shot glass down from the little open shelf above the sink where the water is by now running cold and fresh as he pours three fingers of tea-colored booze into the shot glass. The trick then, he says, is to hold your breath while you toss back the shot. That's when you immediately fill your empty shot glass from the running tap and toss back the water as a quick chaser, all before you breathe again. And he set the shot glass down on the pearl formica counter top all in the smooth motion of pouring from the bottle again.

