

Nose

by Jake Barnes

My wife asked me if I wanted to go, so I went. After what she told me about her boss, I figured she needed a chaperon. Her boss has an eye for a comely nurse.

At the conference her boss showed off his knowledge of wines. I should have skipped the dinner; I had quit drinking years before. Mr. Big was in his glory. The other docs and nurses sipped; the head of Cardiology talked about “bouquet” and “nose.”

The next night the doctors had a buffet in the Aquarium. The building was closed to the general public. We sat on little stools around tiny round tables and picked at our food. One of the doctors, a gay man, was fascinated by the jellyfish. He wandered in the darkened rooms for the better part of an hour. I whispered to my wife that he had missed his calling; he should have been a proctologist.

The next morning we were packing to go, and a seagull perched on a balcony railing just outside an open window in our room. He cocked his head and looked at me with a beady eye. Looking for something to eat, I suppose. A cracker maybe. But we had nothing to give him, so he left.

