

At the Crossroads Bar

by Joani Reese

"Last call," Keiko flicks lights.

The one-eyed vet's chair scrapes against bar wood. A father passes a window, eyes searching left, right, car radio streaming Tchaikovsky into winter's white glare. An eye patch waits aslant his passenger seat. Hands grip the wheel. Each bundle trudging the sidewalk may be his boy.

The vet fits his cap, drops crumpled bills, ambles into biting air. Keiko watches him lift his collar, light a Lucky, pat an empty pocket. Her hand waves, then retreats to the deadbolts. Brake lights flash, their red stars carve fresh wounds into night.

