A Time for Beer
by Larry Strattner

"Hey man, let's go down to the Pub and grab a pint or three," says Gropinski . His jeans are dirty from working on the docks.

"Can't. Got a pickleball game."

"A what?" He says.

"Pickleball. My Ayurvedic counseler turned me on to it."

"What's...?" He begins but I give him my full gig.

"I go there because my therapeutic Qigong routine was leaving a gap in my perception."

"...pickleball?" He leaves his mouth open after finishing, fish-breathing.

"Kind of a racket sport. Not a racket like slot machines. Although slots aren't really a sport, if you know what I mean. I'm trying to design my next 50 years. Trying to match up classical mythology that lingers beneath the surface of this modernity."

"Racket? Let's just grab a brewski." He's exasperated. He lives a simple life, the docks, an occasional woman of questionable morals and brewskis.

"Can't drink beers right now I'm toting up what's right with me. Working on my self-worth Building a kayak. Going to a wheel throwing class. Gonna throw a plate. Sharpening up for that with Aikibojitsu. I yell, *Hi!* Then throw the plate. You know?"

"Jesus," he says without reverence.

"Don't do him. Maybe Buddha if I get some time. Tried Zumba but it was too distracting. Too much bouncing. Too many women. Stuff bouncing. That's living on shaky ground without a disaster kit prepared."

"What's that fucking smell?" Wrinkling his nose.

"Aromatherapy, man. Combines with my cannabis salves and infusions to level me out. This week it's garlic. Keeps the panhandlers off, if you know what I mean."

"Christ. Do what you want. I'm going to get a beer."

"Don't do him either. Maybe Allah if I get some time. Probably trip on that thobe thing though. Have to think about it. You need a few garlic cloves, help you drink in peace bro? Bro?"

But he's disappeared around the corner, going to a brewski, where he often needs to go.